The Most Elusive Spy

A true story of espionage & counter espionage

CHAUDHRY MUHAMMAD HUSSAIN

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A TRUE STORY OF ESPIONAGE & COUNTER ESPIONAGE



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— *Director, Anti-Corruption Establishment, West Pakistan.*

RECIPIENT OF

— *Indian Police Medal for Gallantry* (1943) (*With cash reward and special allowance for life*)

— *Pakistan Police Medal for Meritorious Services* (1952)

— *Land Award from the Central Government of Pakistan for Outstanding Services* (1953)

— *Land Award from the Government of West Pakistan for Outstanding Services* (1955)

— *Tamgha-i-Pakistan for Meritorious Services from the Government of Pakistan* (1958)

— *Tamgha-i-Quaid-i-Azam for Distinguished Services from the Government of Pakistan* (1962)

— *Sitara-i-Khidmat from the Government of Pakistan* (1966)

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AHMAD PUBLISHERS
34-A, MODEL TOWN,
LAHORE
1974

Rs. 15.00
$ 2

PRINTED AT
THE PUNJAB EDUCATIONAL PRESS
LAHORE

To my Mother

Acknowledgement

I am extremely grateful to Malik Muhammad Saeed of P L D for giving me very valuable advice and assistance throughout the publication of this book. I am equally thankful to Malik Muhammad Zahid of the Punjab Educational Press, Lahore for doing the arduous task of proof-reading, involving, as it did, much time and trouble.

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FOREWORD

By

PROF. SIRAJUDDIN,

Vice-Chancellor, Panjab University, Lahore

It has given me the greatest pleasure to write a foreword to Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain's book entitled "The Most Elusive Spy". Chaudhry Sahib's name is already a legend among police circles. He has remarkable successes to his credit, particularly in the discovery and prosecution of corruption cases and conspiracies against the State. He held most delicate and crucial posts in stormy and stirring situations with versatile ability and uncanny probity undaunted by power politics. He is a police ace and a terror for the criminal community. He made many enemies because of his strict and straight handling of his responsibilities. He received numerous anonymous and pseudonymous threats and letters full of venomous abuse. Holding, as he does, a medal for gallantry from the Viceroy of India since 1943, he faced it all; a wonderful shock-absorber and a self-effacing officer.

He made headlines throughout his police career as a great investigator and interrogator in united India long before the partition of the sub-continent. He has always been the most sought-after expert investigator and interrogator for all rough seasons and big cases in the country. The reputation of any police officer in this rare combination could not be higher. He invariably drew up his own blue-prints for operating his staff to revive and recover dead cases. He is an institution, possessing capability, capacity, courage and conviction. Even where he remained posted briefly, he served brilliantly. We find in him a real Sherlock Holmes at work in fact instead of the English prodigy in fiction. No wonder he has won so many decorations at the hands of appreciative Governments.

I knew, therefore, that I would find immense excitement from his account of how he unearthed and arrested an enemy agent. What I did not expect was to discover in Chaudhury Sahib an extremely vivid writer of English prose who makes truth ring more sensational than fiction. A fighter of crime and criminals all his career has seldom been a readable writer. He is that rare thing, a natural writer of talent, who combines mastery of facts with wit and humour. He writes with engaging relish and succeeds remarkably in keeping the interest of the reader from flagging till the very end. His skill at characterisation is exceedingly admirable.

A great police officer, yes, we knew that about him from his record and reputation in the words of Sir Thomas Ellis and Sir

John Ortcheson, eminent English Judges, Sir John Bennet, Inspector-General of Police, Messrs Wace and U'Rein and a gallaxy of other British and Pakistani judicial and police celebrities but a great story-teller and reconteur, frankly this side of his genius was one of the pleasantest surprises of my life. I am a hardened reader of thrillers and spy fiction, somewhat blase from surfeit of such literature and not easily impressed. But Chaudhry Sahib's narrative kept me spell-bound from the word 'go' and I went through the story at a stretch, with never a moment of dullness or boredom.

What then is the secret of his style? I think its effectiveness springs from its unself-conscious authenticity and the writer's dramatic realization of his theme. And yet there is no effort at dramatisation; indeed, his perplexities and frustrations in the pursuit of intangible clues are brought out with captivating candour. We see him and feel him working his way through what seems an impenetrable morass of uncertainties and clues which seem to end nowhere—enough to daunt the boldest investigator and discourage even the subtlest of sleuths. But among many other qualities (of which hereafter) Chaudhry Sahib has the one indispensable attribute of a great detective: he refuses to accept defeat. This is a moral quality and is evidence of the fact that he combines intelligence with character. Character without intelligence fails to produce spectacular results; intelligence without character is negative and stultifying.

The case under consideration is a masterpiece in miniature, a 'classic' of crime detection inasmuch as it reveals and brings into play all the multifarious talents which are necessary for a successful investigation. A great detective has not merely to follow clues, but through imaginative insight 'create' clues where others see nothing of the kind. Mere labour is not enough; thoroughness goes a long way but it has to be guided by intuition and an 'instinct' which amounts almost to uncanny genius. Having 'forged' a clue, Chaudhry Sahib follows it with indefatigable zeal and gives a model exhibition of the art and science of investigation. Interrogation plays a decisive part in any investigation, and here Chaudhry Sahib reveals himself as an acute psychologist gifted with prophetic prescience and precision.

He is the master of dramatic disguises, knows how to play upon the emotions of the persons he interrogates, surreptitiously leading them on to commit themselves. His handling of Giani Sewa Singh, a harbourer of the spy, is an episode of historionic art, his assumption of the role of a 'deshbhagat' a model of play-acting which might put a professional actor to shame. It was no fluke to pass off as a 'deshbhagat'. It was no amateurish

venture. His technique was impeccable. He left nothing to be desired. He played to perfection and performed a fantastic feat in a perilous expedition into dark depths. To crown it all, Chaudhry Sahib reveals courage, physical and moral, of a very high order, a capacity to take risks, boldness combined with circumspection, audacity tempered with discretion.

It is not a lore of the legendary but an epic fully lived in human flesh, a slick story, objective and striking in the extreme, full of search for an elusive spy, a novel way of collection of intelligence about his identity and its masterly follow-up to an exciting encounter with him, his dramatic capture and sharp interrogation and an incisive investigation in the Punjab and Bihar, and his august prosecution, conviction and execution in Delhi in 1942-43. All these phases and stages have, as a backcloth, the scene of various places of a rugged countryside in undivided India.

The story has a breathless suspense that haunts the reader throughout. It grips from first to last, telling, as it does, a scintillating enterprise in pursuit of the spy, a terse dialogue between the writer and the harbourer of the spy on the one hand and the writer and the spy on the other. It is so admirably told and its characters so brilliantly portrayed with a refreshing openness, a poignant depth of insight and a racy style that, even if frequently read, it is endlessly engaging. It is so factual and fascinating that to read it is to remember it. It is worth conversion into a motion picture.

I commend Chaudhry Sahib's adventure as an absorbing piece of crime detection which has all the merits of a thriller while at the same time being a plain, unvarnished account of truth and nothing but the truth.

COMMENTS

By

MR. JUSTICE S. ANWARUL HAQ,
Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan

I have read with great interest the manuscript of Ch. Muhammad Hussain's Book, "The Most Elusive Spy". It is a gripping story of the adventure of an experienced, able and determined police officer, who was willing to take extraordinary risks in the performance of his professional duties. The events are extremely interesting and thrilling and their narrative by the author is most fascinating. Although I have known Ch. Muhammad Hussain for some years now, and have always admired his steadfastness of purpose and his ability as a detective, I had no idea that he had such mastery over the English language. The book makes a very pleasing and absorbing reading throughout.

An interesting aspect of the story told by Ch. Muhammad Hussain is the fact that in his interrogations, he employed the psychological rather than the physical approach. It seems to me that this aspect of the story deserves particular attention and study by the police officers of this Province. It appears to have yielded good results in the hands of the author and there is no reason why it should not prove equally fruitful for other investigators.

I am also particularly impressed by the quality and content of the dialogues which Ch. Muhammad Hussain conducted with the subjects of his inquiries. His lengthy talks with Giani Sewa Singh, and his exchanges with the captured spy Ajaib Singh display a wealth of knowledge of human nature, political aspirations of the Indians at that particular juncture in the history of the sub-continent as well as of the social conditions prevailing at the time. Ch. Muhammad Hussain made extremely clever use of this knowledge in extracting the desired information and in accomplishing his mission.

Although the story told by Ch. Muhammad Hussain deals with events during the Second World War, yet it has a great moral for us at the present juncture of our history. In spite of having been the unfortunate victim of internal dis-unity and external aggression in the recent past, we have not yet learnt to guard against subversion and espionage—the two most potent dangers threatening our national integrity and sovereignty. It is to be hoped that the lucid exposition presented in this behalf by Ch. Muhammad Hussain will be of much value to those who are charged with the duty of safeguarding the nation against these threats.

I am sure the book will be widely welcomed and appreciated by lay readers as well as by professional investigators.

COMMENTS

By

Q. U. Shahab

Education Secretary, Government of Pakistan

I have gone through "The Most Elusive Spy" case with deep interest. It makes very fascinating reading indeed. Prof. Siraj has written a befitting Foreward for it.

The excellence of this story prompts me to suggest that you should write a complete book of your weird experiences—containing, say, five or six of your more important cases, covering 150-200 pages. The Pakistan Writers' Guild will be glad to arrange its publication in English, Urdu and Bengali. There is a great dearth of such literature in Urdu and Bengali—specially when the experiences belong to one of our own nationals.

I am sure this will make a valuable contribution to our literature.

With best regards.

———

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By

MR. JUSTICE SIR JOHN ORTCHESON

Judge, High Court of West Pakistan (Retd.)

That man is fortunate who, driven by economic necessity to take up employment completely incommensurate with his academic qualifications, finds that what might well have been a cause of bitter frustration is, in fact, the first stepping-stone to a brilliantly successful career. Such has been the experience of Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain, holder of the Indian Police Medal for Gallantry, the Pakistan and Quaid-i-Azam Medals for meritorious services and recipient of the Tamgha-i-Pakistan and Sitara-i-Khidmat.

This highly distinguished officer was born in a village in the Punjab situated on the bank of the river Sutlej. His parents, though themselves agriculturists, both had a scholastic tradition in their families, a tradition which Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain, in the face of formidable obstacles, renewed. Fate dealt him two heavy blows in rapid succession. At an early age he lost his father, and soon afterwards the whole of his ancestral lands were swept away by one of those unexpected changes of course to which the unpredictable rivers of the former Punjab are periodically subject. Undeterred, he pushed his studies, and with the help of scholarships from the Middle stage onwards, obtained his M. A. degree from Government College, Lahore in 1931.

Like many another young man both before and since, he made the painful discovery that an academic Degree, however high, does not automatically secure entry into a suitable profession, particularly in a time of acute economic depression and consequent retrenchment such as then prevailed. He accordingly took a difficult decision, and in July 1932, discarding all notions of false prestige enlisted as a Police Constable. He had his reward in the discovery of a hitherto unsuspected talent for police work in general and investigation and interrogation in particular.

His meteoric rise speaks for itself: Head Constable in 1934; Assistant Sub-Inspector in 1937; Sub-Inspector in 1939; Inspector in 1942 ; Deputy Superintendent of Police in 1947 ; Superintendent of Police in 1951 ; Assistant Inspector-General of Police (Crime), West Pakistan in 1955 ; Director, Anti-Corruption Establishment, West Pakistan, 1957. His nine-year tenure of the last-named post, which called for outstanding qualities, not only of investigation but also, and above all, of integrity, was for a short period interrupted by his appointment as Officer on Special Duty with the Government of Pakistan, his task being

the highly invidious one of collecting material for the screening out of officers of the Civil Service of Pakistan and the Police Service of Pakistan, and for proceedings under the Electoral Bodies Disqualification Order against a number of prominent politicians. Another significant step in his career was his confirmation in 1962 against a Listed Post in the Police Service of Pakistan.

The above brief summary of Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain's career conceals a wealth of incident and adventure, out of which it is possible to mention only a few episodes that stand out with particular vividness in his own memory.

In August 1937, while posted as a Station House Officer in Lahore District, he had occasion to follow in hot pursuit of a man wanted in a burglery case. In a desperate bid for freedom, the burglar threw himself into the Sutlej and struck out vigorously for the far shore. Unfortunately for him, his pursuer numbered among his accomplishments that of being an exceptionally fast and powerful swimmer. The quarry was soon overtaken, and the remainder of his journey through the turbulent wasters was performed "under escort". He was made to reveal the whereabouts of the stolen property, and end a thoroughly unfortunate day by having to swim back across the swollen river and being lodged in a police cell.

The exploit which gained Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain the Indian Police Medal for Gallantry, a cash reward, and the grant of a special pay for life by the Viceroy of India was performed in 1942 when, as an Inspector, he succeeded in tracking down and arresting a Japanese agent, Ajaib Singh, who had for long defied all efforts to discover his whereabouts. In a congratulatory letter the then Inspector-General of Police, Sir John Bennett, remarked : "The courage displayed by you on the occasion for which the Medal was awarded was exemplary."

Ajaib Singh was by no means the only enemy agent whose activities were abruptly ended by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain. In 1944, he received the following letter from Mr. E. W. C. Wace, C. I. E., then Deputy Inspector-General of Police :—

> "I am desired to convey to you Government's appreciation of the skill, patience and perseverance which you showed in your detailed investigation and interrogation of the German-Japanese spy group headed by Chopra, and to say that the excellent work done by you has played a great part in the success obtained against these enemy agents and in the extraction of vital information. The Inspector-General has asked me to add his thanks for and congraultations on your excellent work. A copy of Government's letter has been placed on your personal file."

There are, of course, various methods of extracting information, and it is generally rumoured that police interrogation in this sub-continent is not conducted with kid gloves. It is, therefore, pleasing to be able to relate the following incident. Two well known Congress Socialist leaders, Mr. Jai Parkash Narain and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, were arrested (the former, among others by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain at Amritsar Railway Station in a compartment of the mail train labelled : "Mr. Khan and family"). They were interrogated by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain in the Lahore Fort. Mr. Jai Parkash Narain and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia later filed *habeas corpus* petitions in the Lahore High Court. The petitions were heard by Mr. Justice Muhammad Munir, who has contributed the Foreward to Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain's previous book entitled "If This Is Scotland Yard, Hang Them". Much later he recorded :

> "In those days there used to be frequent *habeas corpus* petitions from persons detained in the Fort alleging maltreatment, torture and other third degree methods but I noticed that Lohia's petition made no such allegation. Having the experience of other petitions, I specifically questioned Lohia whether he had any complaint of physical torture, maltreatment, or interrogation late at night, but his unhesitating reply was in the negative. I went through the papers once more carefully and had little difficulty in concluding that the real reason for the petition was the skilful manner in which the two detenus were being interrogated by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain in regard to their activities. The petition was dismissed."

Two other cases go to show Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain's possession of that kind of sixth sense which no amount of hard work can replace. The first relates to the theft in broad daylight of jewellery worth Rs. 65,000 from the house of Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh (later Governor of the Indian Province of the Punjab). After a protracted investigation by the local police had proved fruitless, the Senior Superintendent of Police, Lahore, Mr. J. P. Morton entrusted the case to Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain, then in charge of the Lahore Central Investigation Agency. On the very first day of his investigation he recovered the whole of the property from a European governess. In the second case, two Government revolvers had been stolen with an interval of one month between from the office of a Superintendent of Police, C. I. D. The S. P. himself and his special staff were unsuccessful in their efforts to trace the culprit, and the case was made over by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, C. I. D. to Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain, who recovered one of the missing revolvers the very first day and the other the day following.

A case of great national importance was that known as the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. A number of highranking military officers had plotted to overthrow the then Central Government by force and seize power. The authorities got wind of the plan in time, and a number of arrests were made. Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain was among the afficers of the Punjab Police who received the thanks of Government for the zeal and skill with which they carried out the investigation and uncovered all the ramifications of the conspiracy.

Among the most intricate investigations of his career was undoubtedly that arising out of the assessination in 1951 of one of the greatest men Pakistan has produced, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, whose tragic death was an irreparable loss to the nation. The murder was committed in a crowded public place in Rawalpindi where Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan was delivering a speech. The murderer was immediately caught by the infuriated bystanders and roughly man-handled. As he lay helpless on the ground, a Sub-Inspector of Police emptied his revolver into his body, thus closing his lips for ever. Had he lived, and had Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain not met with certain hindrances in his interrogation of the culprit's widow and small but very intelligent son, the doubt that nagged at many minds as to whether the outrage was the work of a misguided fanatic acting single-handed or whether the assassin was the tool of some clever and unscrupulous persons might have been resolved. The handicaps were, however, too great, and no definite conclusion could be arrived at. An Enquiry Commission was appointed consisting of Mr. Justice Muhammad Munir, then Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court, and Mr. Akhtar Hussain, Financial Commissioner, who later became Governor of the Province. Giving evidence before the Commission, the Inspector-General of Police, Khan Qurban Ali Khan (an officer of outstanding ability who later made history by becoming successively Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan and Governor of the North-West Fronrier Province) described Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain as being in his judgment the best investigating officer in the Province, while the Commission itself in its report referred to him as a police officer of great ability and sagacity.

It is interesting to note that the Liaquat Assassination Case brought Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain into personal contact with a distinguished officer from Scotland Yard, Mr. C. W. E. U'ren, whose services were placed at the disposal of the Government of Pakistan in a final (but, as it proved unsuccessful) effort to lift the veil of mystry in which the affair lay shrouded. Mr. U'ren considered his Pakistani colleague to be an eminently capable

officer and placed on record his appreciation of the ungrudging and cheerful manner in which he gave his time and help.

As was to be expected, Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain's own life was repeatedly in danger, but he can never have been nearer to death than on a day in June 1947, when he was carrying out an investigation into a bomb outrage, perpetrated by a Hindu terrorist gang known as the R. R. S., which was then operating underground. A Mills grenade was suddenly thrown at him and his party. Several persons were killed on the spot, and he and one of his Inspectors were removed in a precarious condition to the Mayo Hospital, Lahore. One piece of shrapnel had hit him in the thigh, while another, entering at the left shoulder, had passed out at his back, leaving two fragments which he carries in his body to this day.

Outstanding as is his physical courage, however, it is by the equally rare quality of moral courage that he is particularly distinguished, and it is this attribute that has won him the unusual honour of receiving tributes from more than one Judge. Thus, on the conclusion of an enquiry against a very highly placed Government officer, in which Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain had conducted the prosecution, the Enquiry Officer, Sir Thomas Ellis, a former Chief Justice of the High Court of East Pakistan, wrote in a latter to the Chief Secretary, Punjab Government, that in view of the status and position of the accused officer Mr. Hussain's task had been a delicate and unenviable one, calling at once for high qualities of adroitness and firmness, that no exception could possibly be taken to his conduct of the case, and that he had mastered the facts thoroughly and presented his case with admirable cogency and persistence in the face of obvious difficulties.

Perhaps, however, the author's career may best be summed up in the following words of Mr. Justice Muhammad Munir :—

> "Notwithstanding his delicate duties, performed in constantly changing regimes, Ch. Muhammad Hussain has risen from position to position and the only reason for this could be his aversion to shelter the guilty or victimise the innocent and adherence to truth irrespective of all personal considerations."

I have such a great respect and admiration of Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain's oustanding qualities that I feel that the above is an extremely brief and inadequate account of his highly distinguished and exceptionally brilliant career.

RECOLLECTIONS ABOUT MYSELF

[The Author]

This writer interrogated a number of foreigners caught in the act of spying on Pakistan for certain foreign powers. Some of them had kept mum during their interrogation for months on end by other agencies. The result of interrogation in all cases dealt with by this writer was similar to the one commended in a letter written by a senior officer of the Government of Pakistan to the Inspector-General, Special Police Establishment:

> "Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain tackled this difficult and sensitive task with extreme tact, determination and energy. Although the person concerned was tough and difficult, the sustained efforts made by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain caused him to break up and to make a full and true disclosure of his activities. Later, ... the foreigner made a confession in Court. ... I write to place on record the very excellent work done by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain. I am giving him cash reward...... I shall be grateful if you will kindly convey our appreciation and gratitude for the help which he rendered and the good results which he produced......."

A top bureaucrat, who was the main accused in the Poster Conspiracy Case and who had defied all efforts made by a specially selected police staff including a senior P.S.P. officer to interrogate him, was subsequently entrusted to this writer by the Government of Pakistan. The accused made extremely important disclosures about the conspiracy and its full ramifications, so much so that the President of Pakistan was personally interested to know from this writer as to how he had broken the hard nut with a stunning speed to disclose all he and his accomplices had done in the furtherance of the conspiracy. The President also took this opportunity to know as to how this writer had broken certain military officers invovled in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. The President was particularly interested to know as to how this writer had broken one of the accused who had refused to tell anything of interest on being interrogated by him (the President) in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, by the then Defence Secretary and by a Governor of the N.-W. F. P., jointly as well as severally. It was long after this accused officer had been given up as a shut case that, as decided by the Government, the late General Haya-ud-Din brought him from Kohat and made him over to this writer for interrogation at the Attak Fort. The accused made a lengthy statement, disclosing full facts of the whole conspiracy, its background and subsequent development adding that certain conspirators, including himself, had secretly met a delegation from a certain foreign power at the house of a certain Pakistani at Lahore.

It was after this writer's interview with the President that a certain officer of the Government of Pakistan who was present throughout, wrote a letter to the Minister of Interier, saying, *inter alia*, that :—

> "I am sure Government would not like to permit a man of Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain's standing, zeal and ability to go even when he renches the age of superannuation. He is the only one of his type now left in the West Pakistan Police and that if at any time a serious case takes place and the services of an outstanding interrogator were required, the choice would fall upon him. His keenness and sense of duty is exceptional and is the envy of many and I cannot imagine what the West Pakistan Police would do without him. He has the credit of having investigated some very delicate and difficult cases and in every one of them he emerged triumphantly. . . . .
>
> ". . . . . . . In Pakistan, there is no abundance of stars and the few stars that we have continue to languish in subordinate positions. At this time particularly when the Martial Law regime has set itself the task of ridding the country of conventions and practices which made the realisation of a good administration difficult, there is need for change of policy. . . . . ."

Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman was still under detention in West Pakistan when a senior officer of a certain department of the Government of Pakistan approached this writer saying that he had been deputed by the Head of the department, Mr. . . . . . to request this writer to take up the interrogation of an important political leader under detention at a place near Rawalpindi. The officer did not name the detenu, but the inference was too obvious to need any elaboration. This writer promptly accepted the assignment, adding that a formal letter should come from the Head of the department or from the Government in confirmation of the informal request. On this, the cat went back into the bag feeling that his trick had failed to tick. The trick was to keep the interrogation to be made by this writer off the record and arrogate the 'credit' thereof to himself. One could hardly imagine a worse case of credit-mongering, plagiarism and misappropriation of labours done by others than the tortuous subterfuge concieved by a 'Sitara-i-Pakistan' at a time when national interests should have been, as they always should be, held supreme, overriding all petty and personal considerations. A similar ruse had been resorted to by this very 'Head' on a previous occasion, too.

I.—ESPIONAGE

This was during World War II. Japan entered the war in December, 1941. The Japanese army swept all over the Far East swiftly. Singapore, Hongkong, Java, Sumatra, Malaya and a number of other towns and territories, which were either a part of the British Empire or under the sphere of British influence, fell to the Japanese in quick succession in January and February, 1942. The war was getting diffused, escalating sideways and spilling over the borders. Fronts and frontiers were fluctuating with lightning rapidity. Simultaneoulsy, the Japanese were building, with a stunning speed, what was called the "Death Railway", a 250 mile track, to facilitate their push into Burma and India. Burma fell in March, 1942. This brought the enemy to the very doors of India.

Japan and India had now uneasy frontiers The relations between the two countries, which had been extremely edgy long before the war, were now in explosive tension. The fall of Burma raised immense alarm and anxiety on the Indo-Burma border.

A modern war is fought (*i*) on land, (*ii*) in the air, (*iii*) at sea and (*iv*) through underground espionage. The Japanese, who were keen to burst their frontiers westwards, started to probe possibilities for using Burma as a spring-board to invade India. As a prelude to the invasion by land, air and sea, they prepared a plan for an underground espionage to (*i*) steal land, aerial and naval secrets from bases where the British were said to have doted their war-planning against the Axis Powers, (*ii*) commit acts of sabotage, (*iii*) obtain a firm fore-knowledge of the political turmoil raging at the time in the country and (*iv*) take military advantage of the situation. This was tantamount to waging a secret war with the most advanced, highly specialised and professional techniques applied insideously.

The scheme was quite in consonance with the mood of the times. This was the most spy-conscious period of the war all over the world. Belligerents sent State subsidised spies scurrying across enemy territories in order to pry into their internal conditions and verify whatever scrappy intelligence they had already had in their possession.

Truth is always the first casualty of a war. The dissemination of nerve-racking lies is one of the commonest weapons of a psychological warfare waged by rival parties in each others country. Belligerents in the war vied with each other zealously applying Goebbel's dictum "If you lie hard enough and long enough, some of the people are bound to believe you". Hitler, too, spoke in the same vein in his Mein Kampf: "The endless re-iteratlon of a demonstrable lie turns it effectively into a demonstrable truth". A definite factor in getting a lie believed is the size of the lie for the broad mass of the people.

Vile rumours ran rapidly, giving currency to fantastic stories, mostly apocryphal, of spies sneaking into private places. Such rumours were deliberately invented and planted or lofted in sensitive spots to sound and survey public sentiments. All this was in essence the same as the English proverb: Give a lie twenty-four hours' start and you'll never overtake it. Consequently, a flood of spy-scare swept the country, as if pervasive spies were, like air, everywhere, cluttering every human sphere. The country was believed to be wholly spy-infested. An unknown underworld of spies appeared to have shaken the known human world so much that the belligerents accused each other of telling atrocious lies, mounting psy-war guns at all nerve centres inside their territories to undermine the morale of the credulous public and weaken the security and solidarity of the home-fronts.

An enemy-inspired rumour is invariably false and fallacious. It has many facets :—

(*i*) It is unduly pleasing, intended, as it is, to produce complacency, satisfaction and indolence.

(*ii*) It is wedge-driving, intended to cause schism, suspicion, diffidence and prickly differences among the fighting forces, the ruler and the ruled, the leadership and the masses.

(*iii*) It is fearsome, intended to spread alarm, uncertainty and panic among the people.

The over-all intention underlying all these devices is to harm and hamper the war-effort of the enemy country.

A rumour is generally, very often by design, cryptic, obscure and unclear. Human nature, being too receptive for any rumour to be critical, accepts it with a great gusto, fills in the gaps, embellishes it with all the flesh, flourish and fertility of imagination in an attempt to make it plausible and gullible. It is not unoften that the same rumour emanating from the same source assumes as many forms, radically different from each other, as the persons receiving or relaying it. Every recipient of a rumour develops,

rather distorts, it in his own way and carries it post-haste to various quarters in an effort to show that it is he who is the first with the news. Once it gets started, a rumour rears itself into a hydra-headed redoubtable enemy, a mole erupting into a devastating volcano.

> "In 1942, news that a Japanese Fleet was seen in the Indian Ocean heading towards north in the Bay of Bengal, alarmed the Governor (of Madras) to such an extent that he ordered the evacuation of (the city of) Madras. The High Court closed suddenly and their Lordships left for the interior. Several officers with records were shifted to the districts far away from the coast, and officers stationed at the minor ports on the eastern coast were instructed to be ready to proceed towards the western part if the enemy landed. But the Japanese Fleet did not enter the Bay. It was all a scare and we heard that the Governor's action in ordering evacuation was severely criticised by Delhi and Whitehall."—
>
> (Chief Justice Mohammad Shahabuddin in his "Recollections and Reflections."

In the circumstances, belligerent governments, public bodies and institutions devised ways and means to effectively counteract all subversive, malicious and suspicious news broadcasts, commentaries, bulletins, pamphlets and rumours and pinpoint their sinister objectives and mischievous motives and nail them expeditiously, fully and finally.

One of the most effective methods to deal with such vicious and virulent campaigns is to set up "Psychological Warfare Studios" and "Rumour Clinics" by psychiatrists, intelligence experts and prime educational institutes and alma maters to analyse and counteract them authoritatively and convincingly.

Aerial bombardment of the civil population of a country by a belligerent country is intended to serve the same sinister purpose as the dissemination of demoralising rumours. The use of poisonous gases indiscriminately and atom and napalm bombs callously to damage person and property of civilians of a belligerent nation is intended to destroy the will power and determination of the nation and break the backbone and life-lines of its fighting forces. Aerial pamphleteering or dropping of paratroopers works confusion among the civilians and army personnel of the enemy country no less. In such an event, the best and the only way to frustrate the diabolical designs of the enemy is to continue to courageously stand up against aggression and strictly observe measures and instructions laid down by the Civil Defence Organisations, whatever the overall damage and howsoever the dire consequences.

Both espionage and counter-espionage are games of skill. And yet the only certainty in espionage as well as in counter-espionage is the uncertainty of the result. Espionage is a tough job but it is tougher to spy on a spy. A spy is much more astute and elusive than an ordinary criminal. A counter-spy is, therefore, expected to be more subtle, more speedy and more sharp than a spy.

A spy is his own hangman, an unlawful combatant engaged in a deathly game, a risky pursuit and a grim business, requiring a great dare and ingenuity. He lives with the spectre of death at his elbow. It is why a successful spy is deemed to be worth more than his weight in gold by his employers and his countrymen.

Espionage, in its latest form as an invisible weapon of war, is, more or less, a growth of the twentieth century. It developed into a virulent virus in the two World Wars. What was once an improvised epidemic of war has since come to stay as an endemic of both war and peace in varying forms in various countries interested in policing the world.

America's CIA, Soviet Russia's KBG, Germany's Gestapo and Britain's MI-5 and MI-6 are among the permanent institutions of espionage and counter-espionage worked in top gear by super-experts in foreign affairs in complicity, wherever possible or necessary, with political or military components of the target countries. A titanic underground struggle is going on between the intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies of these countries and their camp-followers to filch each other's secrets. The parties plant their cells in the Defence Ministries and other intelligence pools of their opponents. Foreign agents spy on foreign agents in foreign countries. Some time, the network, however tight on either side of the fence, leaks at the seams. It is easier to spot out a suspicious foreigner than a local running a racket. Specific instances are available in which double-agents employed by the contesting parties skip and double-cross from one side to the other. Quite a few of the defectors are detected, tried and sentenced adequately, thereby rendering them "blown instruments".

Espionage is akin to subversion. What are visible wars conventionally fought on land, in the air and at sea, over limited periods and definite theatres, are supplemented, besides espionage, by subversion by invisible forces fighting ideological wars over sprawling areas constantly. Subversion from one ideology to another through imperceptible forces is much more pervasive and durable than the changes brought about by ding-dong battles. It transforms the whole pattern, the entire system of constitutions, mode of governments and the very thinking of peoples. Publicity and propaganda more than physical power and money more than men or machines do the job quickly and completely. Control the brain, the body follows.

But it is not unoften that a transformation from one ideology to another spells untold disasters, deaths and destruction and blood and tears much more vast in extent and worse in intensity than nuclear wars. Kings lose heads or crowns and countries their old order.

Subjoined are some of the numerous other garbs and covers adopted by spies operating either by themselves or in complicity with local mercenaries :—

Diplomatic cover : abuse of privileges by diplomatic Missions, Commissions, Embassies, Consulates, Charge D' *Affaires*, etc., by doing various acts of espionage, sabotage and subversion. On being found out, the guilty personnel are declared *persona non grata* and repatriated to their home country.

Religious cover: abuse of facilities allowed to foreign nationals as Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, Nuns, Priests, Ministers, Preachers, Reformers, Missionaries, Pilgrims, Sewadars, Sants, Mahants or persons moving about as Pirs, Faqirs, Divines, Darveshes, Gianis, Sadhus, Jogis, Malangs, demented or half-demented Majzoobs, etc.

Educational cover: Professors, teachers, students, etc.

Business cover: Foreign firms, business concerns, banks, insurance companies, travel agents, commission agents, contractors, brokers, builders, architects, designers, hoteliers, managers, keepers of inns and taverns; bartenders, bearers, waiters, etc.

Technical cover: Technical experts working in foreign countries privately or on deputation officially.

Two foreigners, who came to Pakistan privately and were employed by the government as expert engineers to work on certain projects in 1956 and 1958, were detected committing acts of espionage against Pakistan for certain neighbouring countries. On being interrogated by this writer, they revealed information of value and made statements before magistrates, confessing their crime.

The cases were disposed of by the government in its discretion politically. The number of spies, who met their doom according to their deserts in the fifties and sixties, has been fairly large.

Service cover: Foreigners employed in public and private sectors on non-technical jobs.

Matrimonial cover: Foreign wives/husbands of native husbands/wives by civil marriages, retaining their ancestral religion and/or nationality.

Certain countries were known to have manoeuvred to get both documents and information through their female nationals married to or employed by the nationals of their enemy countries in the two World Wars. A Mrs. Soldinger was among the female foreigners suspected by the British of running a spy-ring in Northern India in the early forties. This writer was on the staff which did eavesdropping on foreigners at Simla in 1940-41.

Beauty cover: Beauty deflects keymen from their duty. Call-girls provide hot-beds for espionage. The latest case of suspected espionage n which both London and Moscow expressed concern was the most publicised sex-and-security Scandal 63. The British War Secretary, John Profumo, was alleged to have shared the same mistress, Christine, with a Russian Naval Attache, Ivanov. The scandal was one of the main factors responsible for the fall of the Macmillan Ministry of England. This writer has written a book entitled "Lord Denning in the Profumo Inquiry".

Relationship cover: Nationals of one country having blood relations with nationals of another country.

A foreigner working as Assistant Inspector-General of Police (Telecommunications), West Pakistan, who had had blood relations in a neighbouring country, spied on Pakistan for quite some time before he jumped the border taking with him all the secrets in his possession by virtue of his office.

Communal cover:	Members of one and the same community, with common interests and divided loyalties, living on both sides of borders of opposing countries.
Professional cover:	Journalists, archeologists, historians, litera-teurs, etc.
Official cover:	Stenos, readers, clerks, ahlmads or other officials having access to secret documents containing interesting information.
Travel cover:	Tourists, gypsies, hippies etc.
Code cover:	Spies have code names, code language, code conversation and code correspondence.
Place cover:	Spies and other criminals have often taken to mosques, temples, churches, gurdwaras and other religious sanctuaries least suspect by the police and the public, posing as worshippers, sewadars, etc., and resorted to hide-and-strike operations with impunity. Quite a few of the spies and other criminals take to jungles or put up in thickly populated localities or with their relatives and friends in private business/government service to dispel suspicion.
Face cover:	Spies disguise, masquerade and personate; wear false hair and false face; use cosmetics, phonetics, accents and dialects suiting situations. They stammer or pose as dumb or deaf. They drape every conveivable cloak and try to skip age and appearances, as though from one personality to another and from one sex to another.

Beards, moustaches and long hair make a convenient disguise and help hide the real identity of spies, adding, as they do, new dimensions to their physiognomy, thereby making their identification difficult even by their close acquaintances. A freshly grown beard is a good blind. A clean face in one's teens undergoes a radical change with a bushy and bristling beard and longish moustaches and hair on attaining puberty.

A Mr. Alais Euler, one-time Press Officer in the Ministry of the Interior, Austria, was tried for hiding in his picturesque beard !

A spy is a peculiar actor without a stage, shy of eyes and audiences. He keeps up covertly appearances. A counter-spy should bear in mind that appearances are deceptive and that he should suspect a spy in every made-up face. A uniform is not invariably a true index of the wearers' identity. What is apparent is not always the real.

Cover without cover: Spies often try to defy the ingenuity of the Police and their identifiers by divesting themselves of their usual pose and personality. A Muslim or a Sikh, who clean-shaves himself or any person who strips himself of all his clothing cover and becomes totally sky-clad, is likely to defeat his identification by his friends and foes alike for quite sometime. Such ruses have been frequently adopted by spies investigated by this writer both before and after the partition of the sub-continent. However, these and other artifices have given them only limited rope. Nobody has been able to deceive the police or the people for all time.

Fifth column : A cover within cover. Fifth column refers to the column of organised body of supporters and sympathisers working within a country for the enemy of the country. The expression was first used by the Spanish insurgent General Mola in the Spanish Civil War of 1937-39 when he was besieging Madrid with four columns of his army. He declared that he had also had a fifth column working for him inside the city. A fifth columnist means a member of such a column. A fifth column or a columnist is capable of doing more damage than paratroopers dropped behind enemy lines. A column or columnist has infinite local knowledge of strategic importance of lifelines without being easily detectable or distinguishable. You never know the endless potentialities of the man rubbing shoulders with you, armed with the same, or better, weapons as you.

Very often, experienced officers or ex-officers belonging to the Police, the military and/or Intelligence Services are sent out under one cover or another to operate secret cells and spy-rackets and collect interesting intelligence for their country. Glaring instances are available to bear this out. A "retired"

Commander-in-Chief of a certain country was appointed Managar of a firm of that country in another country.

Some time, spies keep liaison with the missions, firms, institutions, pilgrims or other persons of their country for money and communication of intelligence and other cognate purposes.

Pakistan came into existence in August 1947. Her twin sister, "Secular India", took to spying on the nascent state with religious fanaticism inherited as a legacy from ancient India. Mr. A. L. Basham, a Hindu scholar working as Reader in the History of India at the University of London, has given a resume of espionage as an institution sanctified by Arthsastra in his voluminous book entitled "The wonder that was India". Subjoined are some extremely interesting extracts from the book showing that espionage has always been a religious tender with ancient as well as modern Hindu India.

> "Espionage is given religious sanction in the Arthsastra. The text visualizes a country riddled from top to bottom with secret service agents or spies. These agents and spies were organized through 'institutes of espionage' to which they delivered information sometimes in cipher and from which they received their orders. Besides, there were special spies directly subordinate to the king or a high minister and employed to spy on the ministers themselves. These spies might be recruited from any walk of life. They might be of either sex. They included Brahmans unable to make a living by their learning, merchants fallen on evil days, barbers, astrologers, humble servitors, prostitutes and peasants. A special class of spy was the *stre*, an orphan trained from childhood for the work and usually masquerading as a holyman or a fortune-teller—two professions the members of which were fully trusted by the public and, as such, could gain access to information which others could only do with great difficulty. A further class was that of the desperado recruited from professional prize-fighters, whose main duty was the assassination of those enemies of the king for whom a public trial was not expedient but who also performed other secret deeds of daring and violence on behalf of his master" . . . . . page 121.
>
> "The ancient Indian spy system was an integral part of the state machinery. One of the spies' chief duty was protecting the King's power. He sought out sedition, whether in the brothel or in the palace of the crown-prince. He served as an agent provocateur to test the

loyalty of high ministers, generals and judges. He also acted as a detective for the suppression of crime. For this purpose, he frequented taverns, brothels and gambling dens in disguise, listened to the conversation of men in their cups and carefully watched those who seemed abnormally affluent. He was an important means of keeping a finger on the pulse of public opinion. In the story of Rama, it was a spy who informed the king that his subjects suspected Sita's chastity." (page 122).

"In the territory of enemies, whether potential or actual, the spy not only obtained information on the strength and plans of the enemy but encouraged sedition, and plotted the assassination of the enemy king and his ministers" (page 122).

"Prostitutes were employed to work as spies or to assist spies. They were protected and supervised by the state. The Arthsastra suggests the appointment of a Superintendent of Prostitutes who should be responsible for the care and supervision of the palace courtesans, the inspection of brothels. . . . . Teachers and trainers of prostitutes were to be given encouragement by the State. As in all other societies, around the prostitutes congregated men of doubtful character— thieves, rogues, etc." (page 184).

"The texts on statecraft recommended that for this reason special watch should be kept on brothels and that prostitutes should be enlisted in the secret service. This fact was noted by Megathenes who remarked that the spies did much of their work with the help of the prostitutes.

"Temple prostitution was most common in the South where it survived until recent times . . . . thus religious prostitution came naturally to the Dravidian . . . . . By the Middle Ages, the Brahmans, who propounded the Sacred Law, might themselves be attached to temples with hundreds of prostitutes on their staffs" (page 186).

Evidently, modern India, with such a sinister heritage in espionage as a firmly established system from ancient India, is essentially wedded to it not only as a state policy and principle but also as a compulsory religious ritual. As we shall presently see under Chapter VIII, the "Doctrine of Circles" postulated on by the Arthsastra, a neighbour is the first and the foremost of her traditional foes. Therefore, "Secular India", true to her religion, soon started sending her nationals in various disguises across the border by the land, sea and aerial routes, Among the disguises has been the hackneyed religious

cover, smuggling non-Muslims as Muslims duly circumcised, keeping beards and conversant with the elementary principles of Islam and the five prayers. The possibility of an Indian spy rubbing shoulders with the faithful in and out of religious places in Pakistan cannot be ruled out. The intention is, not to spread an undue scare but, to inculcate a sense of sharp awareness generally.

It did not take Pakistan long to liquidate these spies. Whatever the denials of their employers for international consumption, the spies captured from various hideouts were never able to keep back their missions and activities in Pakistan. The confessional statements made by them were invariably verified by sifting enquiries conducted from the places and persons visited by them underground.

An Indian journalist, Mr. Krishna Balaraman, a former President of the United Nations Correspondents Assocation, and well known in the Press Circles of New York, made a public admission on a popular television show called the Open End that India had launched intelligence flights over Pakistan and that the Indian Government had issued false cover stories to conceal their design. "One of our planes was shot down. It was a thousand (?) miles inside Pakistan. We protested. We denied it was an intelligence flight, but it was. The pilot confessed. But we said (falsely) it was a false confession . . . "

Espionage, like paratroopers dropped behind enemy lines, is a stab in the back. It works confusion, dislocates war-effort and weakens the defence potential of the enemy. It is very often a fore-runner of military action. "Why should I demoralise my enemy by military means if I can do so better and more cheaply in other ways," says Hitler in his "Mein Kamph". The "other ways" consisted in the establishment of Fifth Column of Nazi sympathisers in enemy countries.

The Japanese acted Hitler Willing and intelligent Indians were picked up from Malaya, Burma and other places in the Far East and given training in espionage by Japanese instructors. Besides civilians, a selection was also made from among the Indian prisoners of war. Training was given to them at various places in the light of the nature of intelligence expected of them. These trained agents were smuggled into India by land, sea and air. A good number of them were infiltrated into the home country in the guise of repatriates and deserters from the army. They were sent in batches and groups equipped with arms and ammunition, wireless sets and sufficient money in Indian currency forged in Bruma with masterly skill.

It was remoured that the Japanese had sent a large number of spies to publicise certain pro-Indian institutions put up by

them in Japan with intent to win over Indians. It was alleged that the Japanese knew full well that these spies would be caught by the British Govt. and forced in their own defence to babble about the pro-Indian institutions. The following observation made by a British Officer regarding the influx of these spies would indicate the reaction of the British Govt. generally.

> "This was a carefully prepared propaganda assault on the morale and loyalty of Indians, calculated also to harass the British Government at a time when the whole country was upheaved by a political rebellion. It was a spectacular assault using the accused as pawns in a diabolical game to unnerve the Government, to sow distrust between the British and the Indians and to get easy publicity for a New Order in Asia. The Japanese hoped under cover of such an order to beguile Indians by dangling before them the lure of a chimerical independence under Japanese auspices. This was a deep-seated plan to enmesh and entrap innocent Indians. . . . . ."

This would seem an overstatement. It was, however, conceded that the Japanese, like any other potential invader, had launched an espionage and sabotage offensive before their contemplated invasion of India. As always, the intention in sending spies and saboteurs was to cause political and economic disruption and elicit information of military importance. But this was a two-way traffic. It was an open secret that the Allies, too, had inspired similar missions under various covers. The belligerents also flew intelligence flights several hundred miles inside each others territory. Espionage and counter-espionage constituted, as they do, a part of the war effort on either side on an extremely intensive and extensive scale.

Still another category of the rumours current at the time was that the Japanese had employed women for espionage, feeling that they could work their way into private places quickly and unobstrusively and that, in the event of their capture, the police were easier on them. But then women are always easier to break too!

As always in espionage, suspicion runs well ahead of any proof. Rumours reject reason. In time of war, in particular, rumours are relished more than bitter truth. People frustrated with facts foster fiction. Truth is tardy, falsehood fast.

Anti-British elements manufactured the warp and woof of credulous rumours so skilfully that it was not easy to come by the truth before long. It was not unoften that the Police

mobilised against suspect spies who in fact never were. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with rumours which resolved into alarms and uncertainties so much that Government had to issue instructions that they should be squashed quickly. However, it was not unoften that some of the rumours resolved into realities.

Whatever the resultant fact or fiction in the prevailing rumours, "suspect a bug-bear in every bush", was the mood of the moment. Even lice-covered beggars and tramps were suspect. Everybody appeared to be alive to the saying : "Regard with suspicion that which seems probable. Always begin by believing what seems incredible." An imposing list of "Security Don'ts" and cartoons warning against "enemy cells" over-hearing interesting talk were on display in every office throughout the country. One of the British Superintendents of Police in the Provincial C. I. D. during the war held an emergency meeting to emphasise a maximum security alert and suspect bug-bears and big-bears everywhere, in as well as out of every bush in every place and every person. "Take nothing for granted ; things are not always what they seem," is a motto for detectives. The British Officer went to the extent of saying, with a smile, "suspect me, too, if you find anything unusual in my behaviour". We soon discovered that he meant it all, both in letter and spirit, although we knew that unlike the son of Mr. Amery, then Secretary of State of India, executed for spying for the Axis Powers, Englishmen were, as they are, too fanatically nationalistic to turn traitors.

But we never knew that what seemed to be a fantastic warning by a British Officer at the moment foreboded the commission of a series of acts of treason and treachery by certain lessor sons of Pakistan in the late forties and fifties of the twentieth century.

A vigilant constable did what certain senior officers seldom could or would. He was on traffic duty on the Mall, Lahore, late in 1947, when he made a dramatic capture of two former Superintendents of Police, a Muslim and a non-Muslim, found in the act of passing, the former to the latter, documents of military importance about Pakistan. The interrogation of the foreigner was conducted by this writer and the case referred to the Government for necessary action.

In sharp contrast to this smart detection and prompt action by the constable, the Head of the Provincial C. I. D. in the early fifties was not half as dutiful as the constable in spite of the fact that the significance of the warning given by the British Superintendent of Potice referred to above was again underlined in a secret

report made by this writer as Superintendent of the Provincial C. I. D., alleging that a certain foreigner working as Superintendent of Police (Wireless) had been seen in the act of holding highly suspicious parleys with the nationals of a certain enemy country at a certain place on a certain date. The Head of the Provincial C. I. D. not only took no action against the evidently "grey" officer with a white skin but also got him elevated to the rank of Assistant Inspector-General of Police (Telecommunications). Besides giving treasonable protection, he promptly administered this writer a dressing down, remarking that the reporter was too petty-foggy to spare a good officer. But it was not long before his blue-eyed protege jumped the border into the enemy country, taking with him all the secrets, codes, ciphers, etc., which he had in his possession by virtue of his office. The incident made headlines in the Press but caused no ripple or ruffle in the brazen-face of his alcoholic patron.

The case provides an excellent example of what the Head of a Department or a State should not be. An alcoholic Head has no head. He squanders public money on wine and women. Wine and women consume health, wealth and weapons. A tipsy and sexy person is generally derelict in his duty. He is always a security risk. He is absolutely unfit to be recruited or retained in any public or private service.

The Head in the case under reference was both alcoholic and a lady's man, a low-caste skunk, consorting with alcoholic subordinates in dancing and carousing. A dedicated devotee of Cupid, as he was, gifted with an overdose of libido, he gave priority to sex over security and seductive damsels over duty, as if beauty is first and duty last. It is interesting that this impetuous Romeo and chronic alcoholic, who patronised and protected a proven spy from punishment, and who was scuttled from service through a scandalous exit, has lately donned the mantle of a moral mentor, excelling the proverbial devil delivering sermons, a rake reforming religions, a fox proclaiming sour grapes after having tasted them throughout his public career. We are good preachers but bad practitioners. It was not the distance between the two wings of Pakistan but the difference between what we profess and what we practise that cost an already truncated Pakistan one-half of the country. Sexless Heads, dry regimes and temperance officers are a rarity.

This and other culpable acts of high treason and moral and material corruption at the top, which have brought Pakistan and its patient and puritanic people to critical cross-roads, would be presently set out in greater detail in a book entitled "Treason Rewarded". The upshot is that the public should never

tolerate a tipster in any public or private office, high or low, stipendary or honorary.

This was a digression. We now revert to the main subject. The vigilance exercised by the British police officers and their Indian components under the shadow of the spy-scare and the imminent invasion of India by the Japanese via Burma paid quick dividends. A careful scrutiny of sensitive places full of suspicious faces unearthed several saboteurs and terrorists operating underground. However, with all their intelligence and experience over the years, the Police ran up against a stone wall in a serious case of espionage in the early forties. This was the case of a notoriously slippery spy on the loose for so long that he came to be widely known as the most elusive spy during the British period in India.

Information was received by the Punjab C. I. D. from the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, Delhi that 24 Indians trained in espionage by the Japanese had been parachuted in batches of three in the jungles of Assam from where they had travelled to various places in India assigned to them for necessary operations. The information, though received from an unimpeachable source, lagged the actual landings by several weeks. Again, though the Intelligence Bureau appeared to have broken the Japanese espionage code, the British Government failed to interdict and inhibit the infiltrations. The air landings were further compounded by more infiltrations by the land and sea routes, where many ran the British guards undetected. The worst feature of all this was that the information mostly contained only bare names of agents without any particulars of their description, much less their addresses. In view of this handicap, thousands were offered in reward by the Central Government of India for the arrest or information leading to the arrest of these agents.

One of the batches was understood to consist of the following three agents :—

1. Ajaib Singh 2. Muhammad Ismail	Punjab
3. Avdeshwar Rai	U. P.

The arrest of Avdeshwar Rai was not the responsibility of the Punjab C. I. D. belonging, as he did, to another Province—U. P. Nothing was known about Ajaib Singh and Muhammad Ismail beyond their names. Full particulars of address were known to the district authorities of only such Indians as had been repatriated by the Japanese from various places in the Far East, Therefore, the British Government issued instructions to

the district authorities throughout the Punjab to maintain a look-out for these repatriates in order to ascertain their "Who's Who."

On his arrival in India, Muhammad Ismail went straight to his village Raunta, Police Station Dayal Singh Wala, District Ferozepur. Directly he learnt from the village Chaukidar that the Police was interested in all persons coming from outside, he went to the Police Station and voluntarily revealed that while serving as a technician in the Indian Army in Burma, he had been taken prisoner by the Japanese and later selected and given training in espionage at a place near Rangoon in order to work for them in India. He stated that he had availed himself of this opportunity as a cover to get out of the clutches of the Japanese and return home without any intention of working for them. He was arrested and made over to the C. I. D. by the local Police. Thus, the culprit was his own captor.

It was established that the statement made by Muhammad Ismail was correct and that he had no intention whatsoever of working for the Japanese. He was an imperturbable, quiet, solitary man of small intelligence, awfully dim-witted and too much of a dope. He did not fit the crime. He was too simpleton for a spy and too green for the game. He did not fit the picture of a militaryman either. He was in fact an apology both as a spy and a soldier. He alleged that the arms given to them by the British were not in a class with the defence of the country. He said that though he had been drafted to the war-front and seen combat in Burma, he was gun-shy and, in the circumstances, he yearned to be invalided home or taken prisoner of war so that in either case he could not be recalled to the colours. He stated that soon after he was grazed by a bullet and taken prisoner, he spoiled to get out of the lousy cell and return home early. Distressing letters received by him from his father that his mother was seriously ill added to his frenzy to get back home by fair means or foul. He said that he, feeling that he had been too long alone and forlorn in a foreign land, had sighed for home all the more. He added that it was against this background that he had volunteered to "work" for the Japanese in India.

Ismail made interesting disclosures about the spy-racket sponsored by the Japanese in India. He described the criteria of selections of secret agents made by them, the types of training given, the nature of the task to be done, the places of assignment and the modes and manners of their working.

Among the considerations which weighed with the Japanese

in making selections of secret agents from every background were the following :—

(*i*) A spy should be adept in designing disguises, conjuring masquerades, assuming unsuspecting roles, changing his wearing apparel and countenance, wearing military insignia of the enemy, exercising remarkable powers of dissimulation. It is not easy to pass under a false name or pose as anything other than what one is. A spy should, therefore, be careful enough not to do any act of supererogation.

(*ii*) He should be a good reconteur and know the land and language of the country of his assignment to enable him to be in the closest touch with the masses.

(*iii*) He should have ability and agility and versatility in elusion and evasion enough to outplay his catchers.

(*iv*) He should be quick-witted and quick-footed, a sharp sensor as sharp as a scalpel, well-up in intelligence-gathering devices.

(*v*) He should speak less, hear more.

"We have two ears and only one tongue in order that we may hear more and speak less."

—Diogenese Laertius.

Walls have ears, goes the saying. The Ambassador of a certain country while eating at a restaurant for tourists in another country was surprised to find that one of the three meat balls served at his table was a microphone !

Ismail disclosed that 24 Indians including himself had been crash trained in espionage at a place near Rangoon in Burma. The trainers spoke perfect English. The training centre was tucked away in an odd place. The city was off limits for the trainees. The course lasted for one month. The trainees were tough and hard to discipline. The salient features on which special emphasis was laid during the training were the following: -

(1) How to collect intelligence.

(2) What intelligence to collect.

(3) What particular places and persons should be visited to collect a particular type of intelligence :—

(*a*) Urban areas—hotels, coffee houses, religious places, political meetings, bars, clubs, libraries, public functions and lots of other public places where every day occurrences and interesting topics are discussed,

(*b*) Rural areas.

(*c*) Cantonments.

(4) How to conduct themselves at various places and impregnate with the prevailing atmosphere at these places and plant cells in strategic installations and institutions.

(5) How to go "incog" under aliases and garbled names for a cover and capitalize on their visibility as patriotic Indians.

(6) How to put in shadowy back-streets or in the most fantastic locations and accommodate themselves to the feverish new tempo and look the most implausible suspect without raising a single eye-brow ?

(7) How to hide in obscure places and chateaus in deep forests.

(8) How to collect letters of introduction to various politicians, memorise all the catchwords and practise standard gestures.

(9) How to deal with varied temperaments of people he comes across.

(10) How to cultivate important officers of the State and friends in every society, party, association and institution and dissolve in the local population and mingle with all types of people taking care to avoid suspicion or detection. A spy should glibly talk his way into all public and private places.

(11) How to masquerade as a "Pir", a "Faqir"' a "demented" or "half-demented" tramp, living in shanty shacks under the shadow of cantonments and see or sabotage the military potential of the enemy from a close range undetected. The belief is that a private eye is sharper than an official eye.

(12) How to scrape acquaintance with persons likely to know what a spy is after.

(13) How to strike up friendship with patriotic elements living under the shadow of police stations and watch the mood and movements of the Police, taking precautionary measures accordingly but, at the same time, avoiding places with too many police around. Every spy is a shy-cock. He knows that even where he lives to himself there are always eyes on him. He knows that nosy persons are around. He passes the police with barely a glance. It is easy to conceal a false bottom but not so a false face. He tries to efface himself to avoid

suspicion. It is true, however, that sometimes a very good way of hiding a person is to put him where any body can see him provided he looks as if he had always lived where he is. He should be able to pass for a local and look as though he "belongs" to the area in which he takes up residence. If one smiles, as one would to a slight acquaintance, people almost always smile back.

(14) How to ingratiate with journalists who poke and pry into all sorts of matters, read anti-Government papers avidly, take to the roads, roam the streets and go after news at first hand and keep up with the latest events and appropriate every bit of intelligence about a variety of topics. It always pays to take a knowledgeable person to sumptuous meals and fill his belly to make him empty his mind.

(15) How to infiltrate professors, students, labour, peasants, social and political parties, unions, panchayats, civic guards, militarymen, policemen and other executive officers with intent to subvert them and collect intelligence from them.

(16) How to subvert and demoralise the Indian component of the Governmental machinery.

(17) How to get mixed up with demonstrators and scurry away on the arrival of the Police and keep on the move, as an enemy agent who stays at one place risks detection and death. A spy always gambles on the possibility that he would remain undetected.

(18) How to commit political decoities in order to augment party funds.

(19) How to disseminate distorted and tendentious reports and inflammatory and subversive literature among the public and public servants.

(20) How to seek out senior British Officers in their houses, offices and other nerve centres of the administration and commit acts of sabotage, arson and murder working as phantom saboteurs. But a spy out on the kill must ensure that the police should not take him alive. He must have the dare to die to avoid detection, detention, torture, interrogation, disclosure of espionage racket, communication network and prosecution and execution.

(21) How to disrupt the war-effort of the British in India. This included :

(*a*) how to instigate food rallies to embarrass the British Government ; and

(*b*) how to provoke general strikes as preludes to a country-wide revolution.

(22) How to set up an agitation for India to desert the Allies and get into communication with opponents of the Government. This was the aim and object of the Forward Bloc of the Indian National Congress. This was what Mr. Subhash Chander Bose worked for and died for.

(23) How to organize guerilla units to create chaos in the country and locate food stocks and secure and preserve them for the Japanese and the freedom fighters and arrange suitable hide-outs for absconders.

(The training in guerilla tactics was substantially similar in spirit as summed up in the maxim of Mao Tse-tung :—

When the enemy advances, we retreat,
When he escapes, we harass.
When he retreats, we pursue.
When he is tired, we attack.

A British maxim has virtually a similar theme :—

He who fights and runs away
May live to fight another day ;
But he who's in the battle slain
Will never live to fight again).

(24) How to strip away enemy's secrets in bits and pieces and how to explode them.

(25) How to glean news of the technological progress of the British in India.

(26) How to control an entire airline in an enemy country.

(27) How to run a broadcasting operation in that country.

(28) How to take surreptitious photographs of strategic places of military importance.

(29) How to steal military intelligence and security, political and economic secrets and information about war planning and under-water weapons. A little leak will sink a great ship.

(30) How to get at documents or elicit information of importance from persons in possession thereof through their domestic servants.

(This writer, while posted as Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Crime, West Pakistan, in the mid-fiftees, got hold of certain documents bearing on a big case of military importance from the house of a Court official through a paid agent employed as a cook to that official).

(31) What precautions to take to guard against the intelligence from falling into the hands of the police. For instance, as far as possible, the intelligence should be committed to memory. One of the spies who disregarded these precautions was caught in Bihar in possession of a code book, a sending apparatus and a stack of unsent messages.

(32) How to cheat and cover one's tracks and how to deny one's identity on detection. For this, a potential spy must know the hocus-pocus and mumbo-jumbo of espionage tricks and concoct, in the words of a British jurist, "an elaborate tissue of circumstantial falsehoods". He must have sufficient cunning and speed and give quick and correct replies. Tact makes truth.

(33) How to resist brain-washing by interrogators.

(34) How to code and decode messages. For this, the trainees were taught how to decipher false figures, ingenious codes, ciphers, disciphers, cryptographs and secret writings and turn letters into numbers and numbers into letters.

(35) How should spies have cipher communications, one with the other, through the mail, at their accommodation addresses.

(36) How to evaluate and process intelligence gathered.

(37) How to transmit intelligence from ship to shore, from one place to another and to the Japanese in Burma.

The trainees were given exercises in aircraft procedure, parachute jumping, positioning of the body in free-falling, the art of the breakfall and soft launching. They were given wireless sets, arms and ammunition, money and other equipment. They made many dizzy drops and sharp descents from aircrafts to train their nerves. They were also pledged to strict secrecy about their mission in India. They were further placed under a bond of silence and instructed not to disclose their identity to one another. They were given good grooming and flown to India directly they were out of training. Before their despatch they were grouped into batches of three. None of them was introduced to the full identity of his fellow-trainees beyond their bare names, faces and voices. Everything else was masked—addresses and places of assignment in India. The concealment of identity

was such a must that some of the trainees officially wore beards.

Espionage techniques have since changed radically. Eavesdropping is now done by ground-listening stations as well as by high powered cameras fitted in high flown planes over enemy country. But whatever the efficiency of the spies in the sky, they will continue to be indispensable on land.

Ismail revealed that his batch, which consisted of himself, Ajaib Singh and Avdeshwar Rai, was dropped by parachutes from an aeroplane in the jungles of Assam one fine morning. He stated that it was about day-break when he and his two companions were stunned to find themselves land on the precincts of a village instead of some safe and secluded spot in the interior of the jungles originally planned. The landing of the trio near the village was fraught with risk of exposure of their mission. They now had an adventure with the villagers. It appeared that the villagers were so frightened to see them land from an aeroplane that they ran away from them while they, for their part, fearing lest they should be found out as enemy agents, scampered into the jungle. It also appeared that the villagers, being war-minded, used to scan the sky looking for landings from planes and fire or flee as soon as one whisked into sight. This was what happened in this case. When they heard the drone of the plane and saw the batch land, they took to their heels. So there was a stampede on both sides in opposite directions. As a result of the melee and hurry and worry that ensued, the enemy agents could not trace their luggage, including the wireless sets, revolvers and ammunition, thrown into the jungle from the aeroplane a little before their landings.

Ismail stated that they were dropped out of the sky into the home country with a breathtaking relief. No rail or road ran within 30 miles of this place. It was a most arduous trek through an untracked forest, its virgin wilderness and dark and dense growth, by-passing many barriers. The forest stretched around them from horizon to horizon with no sign of clearing. The rugged terrain of the forest in torrid heat without any motion in the air turned into hell of a trudge. At night fall, they set up an improvised camp at the edge of a small, sunny opening. Planes swooped overhead throughout the night. They resumed their journey at dawn the following morning and made for safe sanctuaries, ultimately getting to the nearest railway station and taking a night train to Patna in Bihar. They held a meeting at a gurdwara in Patna and decided to meet again at this place by appointment in the near future. Ajaib Singh stayed at the gurdwara, while Avdeshwar Rai and Ismail left for their homes in U. P. and the Punjab.

As decided between them Ajaib Singh and Ismail met at the Golden Temple in Amritsar three days later. Ismail now told Ajaib Singh that his heart was not in the mission, that he had no intention of working for the Japanese and that he would adjust himself to civilian life of rest and repose. He told him that he had a nostalgia for his home and tenderly longed to serve his mother, wife and children at home. Ajaib Singh made abortive attempts to dissuade him from his resolve, fearing lest in the event of his arrest he should tell the Police all about him and get him arrested too.

It was against this background that Ajaib Singh now masked himself with aliases and screened his future strategy from Ismail. He also kept back his home address from him, fearing lest he should be traced and arrested. He told him that, if necessary, he could contact him by mail at the following accommodation address:—

"Diljit Singh, Sewadar, Gurdwara Marhana Sahib, District Amritsar".

But Ajaib Singh never visited, much less stayed at, this place either. He appeared to be aware of the widely accepted dictum that the only crime in spying is being caught in the act. Therefore, in his statement before the Police, Ismail could tell nothing of interest about the home address or hiding places of Ajaib Singh beyond Gurdwara Marhana Sahib. He stated that Ajaib Singh's conversation with him had the unmistakable intonation of the Central Punjab and that, in his view, Ajaib Singh belonged to some place either in the Amritsar District or the Patiala State. He described Ajaib Singh as a fair-complexioned, well-built, medium sized, full-faced and blue-eyed stocky youngman, aged about 28 years and educated upto the Matric standard. He recalled that Ajaib Singh had once told him that he had served as a constable in the Japanese Police for about two months and that he was last doing money-lending business in Malaya when the Japanese selected him for training to work for them as a spy in India.

This was all Ismail could tell about Ajaib Singh. On this, a large number of officers of the Punjab C. I. D. tried various devices and staked detectives to trace him at Gurdwara Marhana Sahib. Quite an army of senior officers assigned every available cop to the hunt, cast a dragnet, donned all manner of disguises and tried every possible expedient. Giant manhunts by super sleuths scoured and scouted the area far and near the gurdwara thoroughly. There was no lead in the clue. Sustained efforts made by different parties turned fruitless.

The Police theorised and used every trump card in the pack, mounted a massive search and sought out all likely spy rendezvous. They issued hurried orders, snapped warnings across the radio and look-out alarms on him long distances, sending emergency follow-ups for his arrest, thick and fast.

The case had also had commercial value. The Government placed high price tags on his head. He was mint money. The arrest or information leading to his arrest carried a reward of Rs. 5,000. He was now high on everybody's list as the amount was quite a piece of money and went a long way in India in the early 1940's. It was hoped that the dictates of duty coupled with the monetary motive would prove a sufficient incentive to the official and non-official agencies to work in double harness to solve the haunting mystery.

Police contacts in the underworld were tipped off. The spy was reported in several places. The information came from most likely and unlikely quarters only in a trickle. However, every scrap of the trickle was assembled and evaluated. Every time the trickle swelled but then subsided too soon. The trail grew cold and had to be pigeon-holed.

The police logged scores of raids and searched all conceivable hide-outs, highways and byways. The search had gone into the sixth month and yet the police were up a stump, miles and months away from the target. It seemed that they were either uninformed or misinformed. No source brought fresh information or fresh thinking to enable the Police to take another look at the spy. Even the best of Police can do little without clues. Hour after hour, day after day, they peered and prodded with no luck. All efforts to track him down drew blank after blank. The more they went after it, the more it became the most mystifying case of the moment. The run-down on all conceivable spots proved abortive. Nobody could have the faintest idea about his correct identity, place of residence, his associates or contacts. The mystery deepened with days, weeks and months. Each day added to the odds, as if he had escaped to the uttermost ends of the earth.

The game was now free for all. Every crack detective made abortive attempts to have a dig at the spy formally and informally. He outwitted the law as well as his pursuers. An already massive file was mounting without material. The mass of Police officers now wilted before the challenge to their experience and intelligence as the case got too hot to handle with kid gloves. In vain did the police keep their ears to the ground and swing through all likely rat-holes. Nobody was sure of his information. The elusive spy defied detection and continued to remain on the nerves

of the Police. His story was in all Police pubs. Too many cooks got indigestion.

All this led to the Police being severely grilled by their top bosses for their failure to dispel the myth and remedy the running malady, a dead case with a living spy, working underground. He was now India's most wanted spy with a quirky problem worse than a jigsaw puzzle neither easily understood nor quickly solved. The law and the custodians of law failed to nab him. The police had now no clues and no ideas and it appeared as if he had been written off for good.

In the circumstances, the Provincial Government got pretty riled about the spy as the problem of his arrest kept popping up, assuming a challenging and chronic character. The Police lost the trail and the man seemed to have completely disappeared. They were now all in the air without having had any working hypothesis to go on. The whole thing seemed to be hopelessly involved in complex angles necessitating brain-racking efforts. The strain of time and energy and waste of much good money was extremely telling. It became increasingly clear that the case was no pushover and that it would be long before the man could be traced from an impenetrable morass.

The Government of India, too, was plently sore on this score. These were very tricky and tense times. Revolution had erupted all over the country. Like the spy, terrorists were operating undergound. Anti-Government slogans were scrawled on walls. The walls were also latticed with anti-British symbols and cartoons. People co-operating with the administration were dubbed as traitors and caricatured on bill-boards with "charges" lucidly set out against them!

Fire-eating and fire-spitting politicians worked up the long-frustrated people by bellicose speeches, shouting and spouting violence, resulting in a rash of rallies, riots, stabbings, loot, arson, strikes and frenzied demonstrations all over the country. The mad malady was the worst version of "The Tale of The Two Cities". The masses reviled and defied the Government. They used every language and every weapon against the minions of law and order. They rushed the police, weasel past them, booing and rasping gibes at them. They tossed grenades into police stations. They barricaded roads and bridges, rampaged down the streets, roughing up foreigners and Indians in foreign dress. Even non-Congressmen were not sacrosanct. They halted and humiliated them. The most hot-headed headstakers among them cried blue-murder of the British, doused their residences with inflammable material, set them afire and built pyres of what was left of the household effects around flaming corpses. Scores of these victims

were falling to bullets, bombs, shells, incendiaries and blinding powders. Numerous British families sought protective custody at storm centres in the country, moving out only under guards and janitors. The terror of insecurity was more terrible than death, more grave than the grave. Mobster depridations were visible on all public men and public affairs no less. The agitation was spreading like prairie fire and it seemed that authority now belonged to the militant masses, milling through the streets in every village, town and city.

Violence was now a legal tender with certain political and communal leaders and their henchmen. The parties seeking blood and power were going full tilt at each other and the Government with their private gendarmes equipped with firearms, explosives and all kinds of other lethal weapons procured from foreign and indigenous sources and kept in miniature arsenals. The rulers of the Indian States were among the indigenous sources secretly supplying men, money and arms to the parties of their choice. Some of them placed their trained troops in mufti at the disposal of these parties, showing them as "deserters", operating as guerillas, gunning civilians and workers of the rival groups in urban and rural areas. Political pillage and murders and competitive communal killings were committed with great immunity and impunity. Violence versus violence both for banditry and vendetta became a reciprocal obligation, a sacred right and a sacrificial ritual with believers and non-believers alike. Life and death rubbed shoulders with each other with too much familiarity without breeding any contempt.

The police alone stood between the political and communal marauders and murderers and between the Government and the mutineers. It was the police alone that bore the blame both from the aggressor for blunting his full blast and from the victim for failing to fully protect him. It was discovered in quite a few cases that the aggressors planned decoy explosions to attract officers to the scene and make tip-and-run attacks on them. This was what happened in the course of investigation of a bomb case by this writer as incharge of the Lahore C. I. A. A 36 Mills grenade was thrown at him and his staff by the Rashtriya Sewak Sangh (RSS), a militant Hindu organisation, killing four civilians and a constable and seriously injuring him and another officer. (*vide* case F. I. R. No. 179 dated 16th June 1947, under sections 302 and 307, I. P. C. and the Explosives Act, P. S. Kotwali, Lahore). The police, which is always meant to maintain civil peace, was now called upon to cope with a virtual civil war.

Some of the top politicians adopted this gory cult as providing the quickest means of achieving their cherished goal of independence. Mr. Jai Parkash Narain, a high-priest of terrorism, was in

the vanguard of the headhunters. He was under detention when he escaped, along with five others, from the Hazaribagh Central Prison in Bihar in November 1942 and restarted a vigorous campaign of violence and carried it out with an unprecedented virulence throughout India till he was arrested by a raiding party of British and Indian Police officers including this writer at the Amritsar Railway Station when he was on his way from Delhi to Rawalpindi, travelling by himself by the Frontier Mail in a compartment labelled "Mr. Khan and family" on the morning of 18th September 1943. He was detained under the Bengal Regulations of 1818 and interrogated first by a team of senior police officers from Bihar, Bengal and the Punjab and finally by this writer. He was candid enough to admit that he believed in violence as the most efficacious political weapon to speed up the achievement of independence.

> "I freely admit that according to the law imposed over this country my activities both before and after my escape from prison would be found to be aimed at disturbing the public order and interfering with the effective prosecution of the war. That I consider these activities to be in the best interest of my country is a political view with which the law and the courts, as they exist here, have no concern."

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia believed, like Mr. Jai Parkash Narain, in the efficacy of bullets and bulletins as being the quickest means of emancipation of the country. He alleged that Britain was now an aging ogre, that the British had been telling unmitigated lies on the reaches of high policy and that "our trial will soon end up in their own trial".

Dr. Lohia says: "The right to violence is in the dominated world linked up with some of the finest efforts of man. If I were to follow the British Prime Minister, Mr. Clement Attlee, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, I would have to call it the sacred right to violence".

Thus, political crime marched on. Terror was the tenor of the time. Tensions, tempests and turmoils, once initiated, grew from their own momentum. JP's saboteurs and Jap spies made confusion worse confounded. The forces of lawlessness reminded everybody how thin was the veneer of the notoriously efficient British administration. The country held its breath, waiting to see how and where the devotees of deadly violence would direct its drifting destiny.

The police had breathless times. The revolution was stronger than prison walls. Jails were too full to take more. There was no

other place to accommodate any overflow from the prisons or police stations. In the circumstances, it became a daily drudgery with the police to round up dare-devils by truck-loads and dump them at distant places out of cities, only to find them surging back home soon. Dusk to dawn curfews clamped down for weeks on rather turbulent areas, blaring out stern warnings of drastic action against defaulters, failed to ease the situation. Even shots caused no hurry or flurry. The atmosphere continued to be heavy. Every cog of the administration machinery was active without being effective.

All this drew a fusillade of criticism in the national and international Press. Daily and often hourly diplomatic flurries were in evidence both in India and England. Phones and secraphones bristled with priority conversations between Delhi and London. Many a crisis session held by the pensive Parliament failed to plug the daily widening cleavages between the two countries. Promises made by Britain could no longer keep sullen people on good humour. All the political parties were kicking up a shindy alleging that the various pacts and proposals made by her were nothing but a paraphrase of her set colonial policy. The co-authors of the "D" Day and "V" Day and the co-prosecutors of the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials against the Axis warlords never knew at the moment that the people of a vast sub-continent whose mercenary armies were at the time helping them win the war would presently put them, too, in the dock with the most ominous choice: Face death or depart.

It was because of such a serious situation that the Government could not afford to brook an inordinate delay in tracking down a dangerous spy working unobstrusively for an enemy country. The mystery was long enough to cause vivid speculation. The Government had reasons to apprehend that, on the one hand, the spy might be operating underground either by himself or in complicity with the terrorists and, on the other, communicating the chaotic conditions prevailing in the country to the Japanese. Time is the spy's advantage and he had already had enough of it. All this underlined the festering problem as "a first must".

11–WHO IS THE SPY?

No counter-espionage could possibly be undertaken by the Intelligence Burean, Government of India or the Punjab C. I. D. in this case without first establishing the identity of the spy. Barring his bare name and description, as disclosed by his fellow-spy, Ismail, nothing was known about Ajaib Singh. So far, it had been a wild goose chase. If anything, the information had never been more than a patch-work compounded of mere bits and pieces. The Police had no tangible intelligence about his identity or whereabouts. Unless he was dead, he had, for sure, fled as far away as the Saturn. My experience from the trauma of failures of the various police agencies running after him was that they had only nibbled at the mystery and that it was why none of them could come full circle.

A Deputy Superintendent of Police, who investigated the case for several months and took Ismail to the jungles of Assam in an effort to recover the wireless sets, revolvers and ammunition, failed to get at anything, as the monsoons had turned the entire area into a muddy quagmire, marshy and impassible. One Zahur Ahmad, who was among the 24 Indians trained in espionage by the Japanese and who, like Ismail, had gone straight home, could give no clue about Ajaib Singh. The stubborn mystery persisted. The police had nothing beyond a massive and mounting file cluttered up with numerous abortive clues. No light or lead was forthcoming from any official or unofficial sources to place him or trace him.

I was out of the swim, working, as I did, on a Special Staff dealing with political and criminal cases of all-India importance at the Lahore Fort. I was working nights and holidays without cease. Three categories of detenus were under my interrogation:

(1) Brains of the terrorist movement raging at that time throughout India.

(*i*) Mr. Jayaparkash Narain, a Congress Socialist leader.

(*ii*) Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, another Congress Socialist leader.

These detenus made *habeas corpus* petitions to the Lahore High Court. Both the petitions were

rejected. The Judge wrote to say that in view of the fact that in those days there used to be frequent *habeas corpus* petitions from persons detained in the Fort containing allegations of torture, he had specifically questioned Dr. Lohia in this regard and that his unhesitating reply was in the negative. Continuing, the Judge observed that the real reason for the petitions was the skilful manner in which the two detenus had been interrogated by this author, providing a good deal of true information to the Government about the activities of subversive workers and those two leaders.

It was after their transfer from the Fort to Jails out of the Punjab that Messrs Jayaparkash Narain and Dr. Lohia and other detenus contributed scathing statements compiled by Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Advocate, into a book entitled "The Lahore Fort—Torture Camp". The makers of the statements tried to glamorise themselves as national heroes by indulging in garishly painting pictures and palpably patent falsehoods. This writer has written a book entitled "Lies Belied" in rebuttal of the libellous lies.

Mr. J. P. Narain, in his statement compared and contrasted the treatment meted out to the detenus in the Lahore Fort with the prisoners of war generally:

"War is the deadliest, most brutal and violent form of political conflict. Yet a prisoner of war has certain rights and immunities which civilized society scrupulously respects. The same persons who would be most mercilessly bayonetted to death in the field of battle would be immune from ill-treatment in the war prisoners' camp and would receive such amenities as the standards of the countries concerned and his own status would warrant".

All this is easier said than done by J. P. and J. P.'s India today to the Pakistani prisoners of war killed and bayonetted in concentration camps worse than the Belsen and the Dachan Camps under the Nazi's, the Bastille under the pre-Revolution France and the Nuremburg and Tokyo trials. He played foxy to Pakistan for as long as two decades in the matter of Kashmir and lately travelled extensively as India's mouthpiece covering up her naked aggression in East Pakistan. He tricked a credulous jurist of Pakistan and her gullible governments headed by

dozing dictators into believing that he was all the way with her in her stand on Kashmir when in reality he was not. A little scratch of the surface would have shown him a rabid communalist in deep complicity with the Hindu Congress, posing as a paladin of Socialism. He displayed his secret spots in his speech at New Delhi in July 1960, confessing:

"I was one of those who were so uncompromisingly opposed to Pakistan that I was hated by the Muslim League."

It is ironic that the very man who had lashed a biting tongue and a peevish pen in condemnation of his custodians in the Fort is one with the aggressor in the contemplated trial of the defender as the offender and in the killings, physical torture and mental agony of the prisoners in the mediaeval houses of horror by Indian standards under the much trumpetted secular democracy.

(*iii*) Durga Das Khanna of Lahore. He was one of the accomplices in the Punjab Governor de Mountmorency Shooting Case at the Convocation in the late twenties.

(*iv*) Dr. Shiv Nandan Rishi of Lahore.

(*v*) Rajendranath.

(*vi*) Ram Rup Sharma, Secretary to Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar.

(*vii*) Ramanandan Misra, a Congress leader.

(2) Repartiates from Shanghai where they had been making pro-German broadcasts:—

(*i*) Ram Saroop Sehgal son of Ganga Bishan Sehgal, Mohallah Sehglan, Jullundur City.

(*ii*) Sujan Singh son of Ran Singh, Rajput of village Droli Kalan, District Jullundur.

(*iii*) Jamna Dass Kochhar son of Bihari Lal Kochhar from Bikaner State.

(*iv*) Jai Chander Vidya Lankar from Southern India.

(3) Indians who had had business or other contacts with the Japanese—

(*i*) Balwant Singh, M.A., of Lahore.

(*ii*) Khoshi Ram, a businessman of Lahore.

(*iii*) Raja Ram, Proprietor, "Raja Brothers", Anarkali, Lahore.

This was the heaviest period in the history of the Punjab C. I. D. We had a frenzy of work which took our entire waking hours. Very often, we toiled agonisingly untold odd and weary hours at peak periods, burning the midnight oil. Sometimes, we laboured immensely full nights. As someone has said "Nights are seldom dead; there are Policemen; therefore, nights merely feign dead". We had so much brisk time and momentous moments that day and night, summer and winter ceased to have any significance to us. We adhered closely to a tight schedule and packed several months' labour into a few weeks, allowing no accumulation of any lagging work. The sedentry job required tremendous energy and intelligence and we kept our nose down to the grindstone. We were usually on the go by 6 a.m. working at high pressure the whole day into midnight, sleeping a scant four hours. The habit of working hard, long and late, and far into the night, when no one except Santa Claus was about, settled into a routine and became a way of our make-up. The Fort was staffed day and night by officers with long experience of interrogation work. All officers worked closely together. The tedium of interrogations and taxing investigations at a gruelling pace of work is unforgettable. We were seldom home for meals and always ate a solitary supper. By and large, we worked overtime, doubletime and wholetime without any rest or recreation.

The interrogation work, in particular, being extremely exacting and exhausting, took up an unconscionable amount of time, as the statutory six, seven or even eight hours a day were not long enough to finish it. We could have no time off to ourselves in a staff never at full strength. Life at the Fort was one of incessant activity. The job allowed only cat-napping anytime. It was a lonely job eased only by (*i*) the sulking detenus under interrogation sitting in front cursing and (*ii*) the splendour of the sombre and silent Fort with its big rambling buildings and massive walls, vast grass walks and water meadows steeped in history and the consequent thrill of treading a place once graced by kings and queens. Though dilapidated at quite a few places and, as such, looking like the latest war casualty, and a dark and dingy reminder of the hazy past, with some sordid offices always uncomfortably furnished, the Fort still retains the aura of centuries of royal grandeur. Too many rats and bats in a number of remote and obscure corners brought up the rear, testifying to the antiquity of the place!

I had so many irons in the fire that I had hardly any time of my own to feel at loose ends. I was far too busy to take any time out. But if ever there was a matter which interested me most in spite of my overriding pre-occupation this was one. I had developed a flair for adventures and a relish for risks over the

years. To catch the uncatchable Ajaib Singh became a raging passion and a first must with me. I decided to set about the venture in good earnest. But the job required a devoted absorption. At best, this could be a one-man leap into the unknown when not even straws were visible in the wind to point towards optimism. Everybody was sceptical and took bets about success in a case which had nothing but dead ends. It required Promethean skill of one's class on a dry and dreary desert. And yet I was lured by its challenge. The adventure seized me. The lone mission promised excitement, whatever the potential hazards and discomforts involved. I knew from the crass nature of the adventure that it would not be a plain sailing or a pleasant jaunt and that it would be vain and unrealistic to hope for an early or easy success. I feared, like others who had tried their best, lest I should be blamed of being no better at my trade. But paradoxically it was this fear and feeling that not only made me to put everything into the effort but also kept up my spirits and steered me clear of any sense of failure or frustration incidental to such grim gambles. I decided to take the gamble with a great gusto, whatever the time and trouble it might involve.

A snag stood in the way. Permission had to be sought from the S. P. (Security) to proceed on this dead case. The S. P., an Englishman, balked at the idea and refused saying that unless he had consulted the D. I. G., C. I. D., he could not allow me to leave the Fort where I stood nightly vigil on certain extremely elusive detenus who always bragged their previous escapades from the Hazari Bagh Jail in Bihar on a Diwali night and launched the terrorist movement long before they were re-arrested and detained in the Fort for interrogation by me. The Fort was a maximum security cell. We were working short-hand and there was no other officer to take turns with me in the matter of security. I insisted, promising to return very early. He agreed. I did my office and went freelance immediately.

The job took me into many a nook and cranny. I first went to Amritsar which was the last place where Ajaib Singh had met Ismail. It was no use making another effort at duplication of any of the hackneyed *modus operandi* so far adopted by various agencies to trace Ajaib Singh at Gurdwara Marhana Sahib, as a large number of Police Officers from Amritsar and Ferozepur had already been gunning for him at this address. I was looking for a way to break away from the hidebound official routine and struggle out of the rusty groove. The adventure had lost all sheen of newness. I made up my mind to do different, pioneer a new approach, put on some novel performance and break fresh ground. But how and where to begin afresh was the problem. I figured out a way of my own initiative to get round his identity.

As stated by Ismail, Ajaib Singh had served as a Constable in the Japanese Police for about two months in Malaya and was last working as a money-lender when he was selected for espionage. The Japanese were repatriating Indian civilians from Malaya and other countries in the Far Fast. I felt tnat Ajaib Singh's identity could be established by working on every repatriate of any account Accordingly, for a start I first checked at the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar and got hold of lists of such residents of the district as had been lately repatriated by the Japanese from Malaya. I combed through these lists and ran down the names and other particulars of address of such of them as were likely to know him. One of them was a Kartar Singh of Beas in that district. I went to Beas and contacted him. The following conversation transpired between us :—

Q.—Sardar Sahib, I understand you have come from Malaya.

Ans.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know Sardar Balwant Singh who was also in Malaya for many years ?

(*N. B.*—I did not enquire about Ajaib Singh, apprehending he might have been his close associate and tell him that somebody was looking for him. If this happened, Ajaib Singh would suspect that somebody other than Ismail was on his track. I intended to tell him everything I knew about Ajaib Singh without mentioning his name with a view to eliciting from him whatever information he could give about a person answering his description and profession in Malaya).

Ans.—I beg your pardon. Who are you and who is Balwant Singh?

Q.—I am from Jullundur. My brother had gone to Malaya with Balwant Singh some 10 years back and has not returned home since. Balwant Singh was fair-complexioned, medium-sized and well-set up. He was 20 years of age when he left with my brother. He was said to be doing money-lending business in Malaya. He was also said to have served as a Constable in the Japanese Police for some time. I want to meet him if he has come back and enquire from him all about my brother. Could you kindly help contacting Balwant Singh, if you know him?

Ans.—(After some pause as if trying to place Balwant Singh of the given description and profession).

I am sorry I amunable to recollect any Sikh by the name of Balwant Singh. (Another pause). I know one Ajaib Singhwho was for some time in the Japanese Policeand also did money-lending business in Malaya. He answers

the description given by you of Balwant Singh. He belongs to some village in this district. I do not know the name of his village. However, I know that his sister is married to one Sucha Singh of village Dhunda near Fatehabad in this very district. Ajaib Singh went to Malaya along with Sucha Singh some six years back. As far as I know, Ajaib Singh and Sucha Singh are still in Malaya.

Q.—No, Sardar Sahib, I am not interested in Ajaib Singh. I want to see Balwant Singh. Could you please make another effort to recollect a Sikh of this name and description ?

Ans.—(A long pause, racking his brain to place Balwant Singh).

No, I am sorry I am unable to help. Do you know the home address of Balwant Singh in India ?

"No, Sardar Sahib, had I known his home address, I would have gone straight there instead of coming to you".

I faked surprise at his ignorance about Balwant Singh saying that he was too well-known a figure among the small Sikh community in Malaya to be missed by his campatriots.

(Still another pause—then asked).

What is the name of your brother and what did he do in Malaya?

"Afzal. He was on the Railway in Kualalampur. I have not heard from him for over a year now, though I have written to him many a time."

He looked satisfied that I was worried and interested only in the search for my brother. As before, he was at it for a moment and then excused his inability to recall anything of the kind. I begged his pardon for the trouble I had given him and left. The information unwittingly given by him got me a start. This just about clinched the identity of Ajaib Singh.

I headed for Dhunda about 4 miles from Fatehabad, a fairly big village in Police Station Vairowal in the Amritsar District and arrived there the following day. I met an elderly Sikh in the fields of Dhunda and asked him if any one from his village had lately come from Malaya.

(*N. B.*—I made no enquiries about Sucha Singh by name).

The old man told me that a certain Bhagat Singh of his village had recently come from abroad—Malaya or some other country he did not know. As advised by him, I contacted Bhagat Singh. He told me that he had only lately been repatriated from

Malaya. He said that some other families of his village had also gone to Malaya. Among these, he mentioned the name of Sucha Singh, who, he said, had gone to Malaya with his brother-in-law Ajaib Singh of Kallah, a village about 10 miles from Dhunda. He said that Sucha Singh and Ajaib Singh were perhaps still in Malaya as they had not been seen in the village. He enquired about the purpose of my quest. I told him that I was looking for somebody from Malaya who could tell me about my brother who had gone there some 8/9 years ago and had not returned home.

Q.—Who is your brother? What is he in Malaya?

Ans.—Afzal, working as a Booking Clerk on the Railway in Kaulalampur.

Bhagat Singh expressed his inability to help me and I left him. I got the tip. Ajaib Singh belonged to a neighbouring village Kallah. I walked back to Fatehabad and reached a tonga-stand. I learnt that Kallah was about six miles from the place and that there was a tonga-service between Fatehabad and that village. I was looking for a tonga for Kallah when a Sikh driver hailed me. I engaged him and left.

It was about noon by now. On the way, I ingratiated myself with the driver, making up a pitiful story that a man known to one Ajaib Singh of his village had cheated me of Rs. 10,000. I told him that I was looking for that man and had come to Kallah in the hope that Ajaib Singh might help me trace the man. I assured him that I was only interested in punishing the culprit and that the money, if recovered, could be shared between him and Ajaib Singh or given to some charitable institution. He placed Ajaib Singh from the few particulars of his identity I was able to give him. He told me that he knew Ajaib Singh closely, that he belonged to a comfortable agriculturist family of his village but feeling that, in spite of all that the family had, life in the village was a daily struggle, had gone to Malaya along with his brother-in-law, Sucha Singh of village Dhuna in 1934 and that he was, to the best of his knowledge, still away from the village. However, he promised to make enquiries from the father and other relatives of Ajaib Singh. He also said that Ajaib Singh was the first child of his father in three marriages and that he had been educated upto the Matric standard at the Khalsa High School, Taran Taaran, a Tehsil in the Amritsar District. He said that previously he used to ply his tonga during Ajaib Singh's schooling at Taran Taaran when their paths crossed frequently. The village was off the track. He left me on its outskirts and himself went into it, promising to be back soon. He did not take long to report back to me that Ajaib Singh had not yet returned home and was either still abroad or staying with some of his relatives in the Punjab in spite of the fact that his father was lying ill in bed. I had reasons to believe

that Ajaib Singh had never been so much as to set his foot in his village after his return, not even to see his ailing father.

The tonga-driver told me that Ajaib Singh had close relatives living in certain Chaks in Police Station Khurarianwala, district Lyallpur. I took down the names and other particulars of addresses of his relatives for a check-up at those places. I instructed the driver to leave the matter where it was till such time as I saw him again in his village or at the tonga-stand in Fatehabad. A little tip did it more than the warning. He promised to keep his peace. He did not ask me nor did I tell him my name or other particulars of my identity.

It was about 4 p.m. in the month of April. I picked my way through the fields. I soon encountered three urchins and a young Sikh bathing in a channel. I first parried them by inquiring my way to get to the next village but then walked over to them. On my inquiry, the youngman told me that he was Sadhu Singh from Kallah, working as a Jamadar in the Army at Ferozepur from where he had come on a short leave.

Sadhu Singh : What brings you here ?

I : I am on my way to see a relative. I feel that it is yet too hot for me to continue to the next village.

I seized this opportunity to confirm and cross-check what the tonga-driver had told me. I asked Sadhu Singh if he or anyone from his village had ever been to Malaya. He said that he had never been to Malaya but one Ajaib Singh of his village had gone to Malaya and was still there. On this, I heaved a sigh saying that I knew Ajaib Singh from my school days at the Khalsa High School, Taran Taaran since 1934 and that I loved him so dearly and now missed him so sadly. His memory tugs at my heart.

Sadhu Singh : Would you know Ajaib Singh if you saw him again ?

I : (with a happy) Yes ; I remember him from long ago. He was a great friend to me, He has left me in a shadow.

Sadhu Singh tried to exchange reminisces about his school days. He claimed that Ajaib Singh had been his bosom buddy and a constant companion. He said that he had at least one consolation and that was that although Ajaib Singh was away in Malaya, he had left him his photograph. I requested him to show me the photograph. Now that I was doubly sure that Ajaib Singh was not in the village, I accompanied Sadhu Singh to his house and saw a photograph of a young, clean-faced, good-looking Sikh, bearing underneath the name of Ajaib Singh. I had a full look at the photograph, drawing a mental

image of the man. I told Sadhu Singh that it tallied with the description of my friend Ajaib Singh to his last whisker. I requested him to give it to me, for he belonged to the same village as Ajaib Singh and would have ample opportunities of meeting him when he returned to the village. Sadhu Singh declined to part with the photo but promised to have a copy made and sent to me if I cared to leave my address with him.

I felt that it was very necessary to secure the photo of the hunted man. The police had no portrait by which he could be identified nor had they any person in their confidence other than Ismail who had consciously seen him. Therefore, I gave Sadhu Singh the following accommodation address, requesting him to write me in Lahore, enclosing the promised photograph.

"Manmohan, Insurance Agent, Guru Arjan Street, Krishan Nagar, Lahore."

(Please note that I gave Sadhu Singh a pseudonym believing that if Ajaib Singh returned home and met him he would think that one of his old acquaintances from the school by the name of Manmohan had been to see him in passing by his village. I knew that Ajaib Singh would try to recall who this Manmohan could be and that he might attribute his inability to recollect any such acquaintance to his forgetfulness or distance of time).

The gimmick did not work. Weeks upon weeks passed. Sadhu Singh did not keep his word. He sent me no photograph.

I now made secret inquiries at all places in the Punjab where relatives and customary contacts of Ajaib Singh were reported to be residing. No clue could be found of him or his visit to any of the places or persons.

Ismail had stated that Ajaib Singh had stayed for some days in a certain gurdwara in Patna on their way from Assam to the Punjab. I went to Patna and looked for Ajaib Singh in the gurdwara. There was no trace of him.

I had achieved one thing. Every beginning is difficult. I had begun. I had the beginner's luck. I had won the first round. It was a trip of discovery. I had discovered the identity of the spy. This was the highlight of the trip. The very first flash was a thriller, a delight of discovery which gave a new muscle, a fresh spur to the stale hunt, a big stride forward, promising, as it did, a quick going venture. It brought the case right to our feet. We felt the ground. The net began to close around the quarry. We now knew who the spy was. It remained to be seen where he was.

The establishment of the identity of the spy gave rise to considerable optimism and chattiness that I had pulled a boner and that I might get at him any moment. ı he D. I. G., who had always been in a grumpy mood on previous failures, was now all smiles and observed that "He has done it again. He has a feel for discoveries, a knack for making bricks without straw, a nose for nagging mysteries and elusive spies. He has, with his staggering imagination, blazed the trail". The Government of India congratulated the Punjab Government on this achievement.

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III—STRAWS IN THE WIND

The Police now knew Ajaib Singh's root's and all their ramifications. "Where is the spy" was, however, still a moot point. No firm information was available. The general consensus of people contacted by me at Beas, Dhunda and Kallah was that he was still abroad. This was corroborated by the total black-out of clues regarding his possible visits to his parents and other close or distant relations in the country. All this gave rise to speculation. Some sources high in Police circles claimed that he was still abroad. Others believed that he was working underground or lying low somewhere in India. For my part, I scouted the theory that he was still away from the country. Nothing could cancel the positive statement made by his accomplice, Ismail, that they landed and travelled together in India. Ismail was too simple to conceal or concoct anything.

I was back in my saddle in the Fort, hoping that now that his identity had been firmly established, Ajaib Singh could be arrested by any of his pursuers. But nothing happened. A bleak lull followed. A good two months elapsed. The topic lapsed. His arrest still seemed months and years away. With all this, I did not put it off my mind, though I put my dates of departure forward from one weekend to another. I was all the time thinking how best to go about it next.

I had a hunch from the first that Ismail had not disclosed his full mind. Therefore, at about 10 O'clock one night in June 1942, I took time out to talk to him. I went to his cell and awakened him out of his sleep. He was noddling in his sleep. His eyes blinked in the light. He was still rubbing the sleep from his eyes with his knuckles when I told him that he had wilfully withheld from his interrogators correct information regarding the where abouts of Ajaib Singh and that he had evidently made a collusive statement to cover him up. I alleged that he had flashed a false trail and conjured up a fake image about his co-accused. I said all this merely to make conversation.

Ismail denied the allegation and claimed that he had already disclosed to his interrogators whatever he knew about the man.

He reiterated that Ajaib Singh was a stranger to him in all but name. I warned him that he had lied heavily and was still keeping back information of value.

After much furious raking of his brain, Ismail spoke in a voice still thick with sleep that he had kept back nothing from the Police. I bawled that he should give up prevarication and tell the truth. Though he seemed genuinely to know nothing about the whereabouts of Ajaib Singh, I told him that I knew there was something he was keeping back. In fact, I knew next to nothing. He was a man of small intelligence, too simple, a boob to bluff or lie.

As before, Ismail again expressed his inability to add anything to what he had already stated. But I continued to badger and vamp him out of the secret. He was on the rack trying to recall what omissions he might have made. It seemed his heart was heavy. His eyes swollen with sleep, he wept bitter tears. He pleaded that now that he was still groggy with sleep, he would go over it with me another time. I did not relent. He stood ruminating. At last, after about half an hour's heart-searching, he made the following statement :—

> "There is one thing which I have just recalled to my mind but it is hardly worth anything. It is so small that it had passed out of my knowledge. That's why I had omitted to mention it to any of the interrogating officers.
>
> It is this :—
>
> "Ajaib Singh had also told me at the time of our last meetingat the Golden Temple in Amritsar that he had a mind to remain in hiding through a Giani of Taran Taaran without telling him that he had been assigned to work for the Japanese in India. He had also disclosed to me that he would tell the Giani that he had picked a quarrel with his parents in his village and now wanted to do some work to eke out his living through him (the Giani). He had further told me that the Giani lived in Taran Taaran near the house of the local Kotwal (Sub-Inspector Incharge of the town Police Station) and that he had chosen the Giani's house near the residence of the Kotwal feeling that the darkest place is under the candle-stick. He did not tell me the name of the Giani. As already stated by me, I do not know the name of the village to which Ajaib Singh belongs. Incidentally, though a Sikh, Ajaib Singh had none of the eating inhibitions of his co-religionists".

It was around mid-night when Ismail tipped me off that Ajaib Singh was in hiding through a Giani. This was just about the time when I could steal a wink of sleep from the long and tiring tedium of the day's drudgery. "Nothing ever happens till you are just going off duty" is a common saying. So, it happened at dead of night. The information gave further ideas to my ambition. I felt that though there was no outside corroboration of the latest tip and that, as such, it had a faint prospect, being too slim and skimpy to promise much lead, it was revealing enough to give me my first edge, just an acute angle worth a try. However, slender and small, I set great store on it as it was tempting enough to go on with. I relished the prospect very much. Previously, comparatively tiny tips had been sending the police scurrying. I was, therefore, keen to follow it up and take a chance on Ajaib Singh right away. It appeared that the Giani was a coverman for Ajaib Singh and that I should make an under-cover contact with him.

As on the previous occasion, I urgently phoned the information to the S. P. (Security) saying "I have got a possible". I sought his permission to proceed to Taran Taaran and pursue the information immediately. He had to tumble out of his bed to answer a nagging phone at late hour. He spoke rapidly disagreeing to my leaving the Fort at an odd hour of the night and desired that I had better wait till he had obtained the approval of the D. I. G. for my departure at dead of night, or, alternatively, I should pass the information to some other officer to follow it up quickly. I, however, again got on the line and repeated my request, adding that as the tip off was the last straw for the Police and checking it difficult, something of interest might come out of it only if I were given a chance to develop it. I gave him the grim assurance that there was a glimmer of hope to ring the bell, if I did it solo as nobody else would be able to put it the way I wanted it and that this might be something and again it might not. I advised him that though the tip promised little lead, we should play it for all it was worth. I also assured him that I would figure out a way of my own initiative to get around it. I was anxious to race at it. I had set my course and was determined to go all the way. It became my prime and passionate hobby. My mind tingled with the ambition that I must succeed. It was a gruelling competition. Therefore, I urged extreme haste, telling him that the information gave a spice of urgency to the matter and that, in the circumstances, I was keen to have an overnight travel. It was after much anxious telephoning that I got a grudging "O. K." from him.

This was how the sketchy information set me going. I set the alarm clock for 3 and went to bed to have a bit of sleep.

I woke up early, did the bed and tiolet and tidied up hastily. I dressed myself casually, shifted some money from one suit to the other, snatched a hurried breakfast, alerted the Lines Officer, Sub-Inspector Gurdit Singh, grabbed a brief kit, and left the Fort on the double darkly before dawn. I hired a taxi car, shoved the kit on the dicky and set forth upon my journey towards Amritsar enroute to Taran Taaran. We went past the Shalimar Gardens at cock-crow. Though the sky was clear, it was still inky dark and dumpy. Nobody was stirring. Business and life were as quiet as at dead of night. I asked the driver to put on speed. The engine soon picked up speed to a blazing 60 miles an hour with the aid of a following wind. The country-side was coming awake. The first glimmer of dawn foreboded a cool and crisp morning. But we had hardly gone about twenty miles when, with the peep of day, we were overtaken by a stormy weather. A gale rose and started blowing the wrong way. The howling blizzard blurred visibility. Loose leaves and broken twigs ran riot along the road. We lost the speed to the drag of the opposite wind. The car went heavily. Blinding eddies of dust whipped our faces congealing on their sweat. Our faces soon became grey from the sticky dust. A wisp of dark cloud moved up in front of us, built up and darkened the bleak sky. More clouds rushed past us. The weather became heavy. A storm broke on us. Rain came teeming down in a single cloudburst. Lightning cracked and lashed more rain. Thunder peeled and crashed over-head, rolled and rumbled far away. The sky opened with torrential rain which now came down in a deluge with a stunning fusillade of more thunder. Nothing could be more deafening. Only the concert of the shrieking wind and patter of the rushing rain was audible. Monsoon rains appeared to have broken. It was far through June 1942, the eve of wet July when it rained fifteen inches to the month. The weather could not have been worse for that time of the season. It seemed on the edge of more rain.

I put my faith in the driver and continued the journey. But it was not to be. His derelict car skidded and careered down the road out of control. It turtled a few yards, ploughed into a field and failed to negotiate deep mud and other obstacles. It soon soft-pedalled into a tree and taxied to a stop, getting hopelessly mired. One of its back wheels was ripped off. My head snapped forward. No body was on hand to help us. The driver replaced the wheel amid pelting rain. A strong blustery wind bent him double while rain beat in his face. He did it all by himself and returned to the steering seat fairly quickly. He now found that another wheel had got stuck up deep. He worked it loose equally quickly. The drenched engine survived the impact and the rain. But it took long to salvage the car

from the deep ditch it had dug for itself. The wheels spun around and cut deep grooves in the ground. The car reeled back and strained against the gradient, revved up and rattled. I had to come out to help extricate and haul it out of the sticky morass. I was blinded and soaked by rain which was drumming down on everything. I wiped my hands on my handkerchief. I had to wear a temporary beard to hide a slight scratch on my chin sustained in the accident.

It was getting on to 9 o'clock before the car gained traction and taxied to the tarmac of the road. In spite of weather hazards, the driver tried to send the car into speed but its rattle became a roar. With all this, we drove through the driving rain. It was still raining hard in great earnest without the least let up. The terrific beat of the rain pounded the car and rapped at the wind screen. The rain put a temporary chill in the air. It seemed to douse and delay the enterprise.

Amritsar loomed into view. The wind subsided. The clouds lifted a bit. The sky cleared in patches. The people started going about their daily lives. The rain settled back to a persistent drizzle. At one stage, luckily briefly, the drizzle relapsed into a deluge. We got back into a dull drizzle soon. The weather was still sulky. The car was dripping with rain. The solitary relief in the midst of the atrocious weather was the lush landscape and the beautiful countryside around. Glistening trees silhouetted against a resplendent sky, shimmering peddy crops and unsullied green fields running for mile upon mile and stretching into infinity made a beautiful pageantry of Nature, a balm for the dustful eyes. It looked as if rain and rice had worked in double-harness to make a good substitute for the erstwhile stale and sultry air.

We stopped briefly for a snack at an eating place in Amritsar. The driver also stopped at a bar for a few beers. Another short drive and we should have reached Taran Taaran. But we did not as we could not. From now onward we had to leave the Grand Truck Road as Taran Taaran was connected by a feeder road. It proved a longish drive. It took us another hard hours' travel going by the road full of jagged holes. The road, which ran straight past Amritsar alongside the railway line, appeared to have been built more as an obstacle than as a convenience. It was so bad that anything over five miles per hour was speeding. The tyres were crunching gravel as the car swung in circles to avoid one hole after another. At one place, the road dipped down a cause-way. At another, it bifurcated. The driver stopped to ask the way as we did not know which route to take. We took the worse one and that was the right one. I braced myself as the car jolted over the corrugated and

broken and bumpy road, mostly sloppy from rain, a mass of pot-holes turned into deep puddles.

We reached Taran Taaran at about 10-30 a.m. My clothes were still soaking wet. I relieved the taxi car and went straight to the address on a street near the Kotwal's house, as given by Ismail. I went to street after street, making enquiries about the Giani. This was all the address Ismail had given me. There was no one of that name or profession at this address. No Giani lived or had ever lived near the house of the Kotwal or in that locality.

I again turned over the information given by Ismail in my mind. Knowing, as I did, from my previous enquiry that Ajaib Singh had been educated at the Khalsa High School, Taran Taaran, a pioneer national institution integrated with the traditional life of the Sikh community in that area, I thought that among the likelies of the Giani mentioned by Ismail might be a teacher of that school. Therefore, I now went straight to the school. It was close to noon. The school clock struck 11-30 when I reached there. The rain took off, the weather cleared up and the sky lightened. The noon broke clear with a bleak sky. The sun came burning down. The air scarcely moved. The place soon became as dry as a bone, oppressively hot and steamy.

The school was in session. A handful of youngsters, ostensibly truants, who had developed class hatred, lazed on the road-side under dripping trees. I first walked past them, professing not to notice them on my way to some further village, then turned round as if to relax under the shade where they were at play. I found them playing houses with small planks for tables. I dusted off my dirty trousers in the shade and inquired of them casually :—

"Which school is this ?"

Ans. (by one of them) "Khalsa High School".

"Oh, I had a Giani teacher as my friend in this school," said I.

"There are three Gianis in the school. Which of them is your friend" ? asked one of them.

"I have forgotten his name. I met him long ago. Could you please refresh my memory" ? I asked.

"Giani Sardara Singh, Giani Sewa Singh and Giani Kartar Singh" came the quick reply and the question:

"Which of these Gianis is your friend? You can see him in the school and I can accompany you for a guide".

I gave a smile and said "No, I shall not disturb my friend in the school. He must be busy. It would be well worth meeting him off the school. Where do these Gianis live"?

"Giani Sardara Singh lives in the town, the other two about two miles out".

I thanked the urchins and carried on my way in the same direction from which I had approached them. I was all at sea. The obstacles were staggering. My expectations appeared to have exceeded the realities. I had now no illusions about the size of my task. I had drawn a blank on the information, The trail had led up a blind alley. I had gone to Taran Taaran with the information that Ajaib Singh was in hiding through a Giani living near the house of the Kotwal. What did I find on reaching Taran Taaran? Much to my disgust, three Gianis instead of one; none of them living near the house of the Kotwal. Thus, all the recitals relating to the location of the Giani's house given by Ismail proved to be next to nothing, being nothing more than a thin dope which led me nowhere and, instead, ran me into several by-ways. It was not possible to make my theory fit into the facts found on the ground. This snuffed out the last glimmer of hope. The adventure became as heavy as the wheather.

I was in a pickle, dazed and dizzy, disappointed at the fate of the mission. I had now nothing to go on except a firm faith. The information ended. Ideas stormed. The idea was how to feel the way now that the information and time had run out. My first impulse was to take the next train home. I chucked by brief gear into a tonga and got to the railway station. What pained and panicked me sick was that I had been able to obtain permission to come out of the Fort with great difficulty and was now going back to Lahore without success.

The train was about to arrive. I was all set to return to headquarters when suddenly I felt different. I knew I won't be allowed back again. I refused to accept defeat and decided to stay on. I re-affirmed my determination to see it through. For want of anything better to do, I resolved to interview the three Gianis, one by one, on the chance that any of them might tick. The booking clerk was counting me change when I returned the ticket. The train came and left. The railway station again looked a deserted place in a cheerless town.

I re-entered the town and lunched at a way-side hotel. It was not much of a hotel or much of a lunch. But the loose moment afforded me an opportunity to do some fast thinking as to how to open conversation with each of the Gianis, how to identify myself and the critical issue, how to get it going and how to dress up appropriate words to elicit information about the spy and get at

him without exciting suspicion. It seemed as ticklish to get suitable words together to compose and make conversation with a possible harbourer as to catch his protege.

It was now a sizzling day unbearably hot under the broiling sun beating overhead. The town was sweltering in the torrid heat and humidity. The summer season was well into its intensity. Quivering heat waves ran on the horizon. The temperature was abnormally high in the 120s. Heavy rain and high temperature made it a terribly gruelling day. Tempers frayed. Sultry heat, melting blasts of scorching wind and the quivering heat waves made me dizzy tizzy. I was drenched now with rain, now with sweat. All this was an annual feature of the summer season. In India, as in Pakistan now, the climate gravitates between extremes. One is steam-boiled in summer and deep-frozen in winter.

It was about 12-30 p.m. by now, a high noon in hot summer. I reached Giani Sardara Singh's house in the town to find that he had just arrived from the school. I braced myself and knocked urgently at the door. The Giani answered the door as soon as I announced my arrival. After an exchange of formal greetings, I told him that I had come to see my friend Ajaib Singh, one of his old students who, I added, had given me his address, if and when I intended to contact him. He expressed his inability to help unless I gave him some more particulars. I told him that Ajaib Singh belonged to some neighbouring village and was educated at the local Khalsa High School some 8/9 years back. I further told him that after passing his Matric Examination, Ajaib Singh had gone abroad and reportedly returned to his homeland only recently. The Giani narrowed his eyes and excused ignorance. I did not take long to know that he did not know. I left him, apologising that I had come to the wrong person through error.

I now went to the house of Giani Sewa Singh situated pretty well out in the suburbs on the Taran Taaran-Amritsar Road. Except for some huts, his was the only house for the two miles from the town. On the gate of his house was a brass plate lettered "Giani Sewa Singh". Directly I approached the gate, a dog met me half-way and took a solid hold on my trousers. Some children playing in the courtyard of the house answered my alarm before he could clamp a firm bite. What I avoided was, beside the bite, the shaggy dog's shaking himself near me, polluting my clothes. It was an elegant and sumptuous house, virtually a high-hedge bungalow, good in conception and execution, contrasting oddly with the over-all squalor of its surroundings. A frightfully fat and ungainly looking old man, dandling a child on his knee, was grazing his cattle on the nearby greens. On my enquiry, he and the children told me that the Giani was not home from school yet and

was expected back any moment. It was a few minutes to 2 p.m. by now, a scant 10 to 15 minutes before the Giani's return home from the school. I seated myself on a doubtful-looking charpai lying in the courtyard near the road.

The old man was very inquisitive about my identity and my purpose in seeing the Giani. I took a loathing to him at first sight. I excused my inability to talk much saying that I was not keeping good health and that I had come to see the Giani casually. In fact, I felt that the more one talks to an unconcerned person, the more one indulges in irrelevancies. thereby running the risk of being found out. This was a situation in which even less would be more. Moreover, I was keen to prime for my confrontation with the Giani, formulate for myself a future role, do advance thinking as to how to pop the topic and figure out a good cover story and contrive handy pretexts to explain my object and adapt myself to the mood of the place. I wanted time to guess ques ions and compose answers.

Giani Sewa Singh returned from the school at about 2-15 p.m. The children told him that I was waiting to see him. On this, coming towards me now was a big, hulking six-footer, a well set-up and soldierly Akali Sikh, with a long frightening Kirpan (sword) hanging from his shoulders at the ready. He was in his sage mid-40s, with a homely face, a definite paunch, a large and bristling beard and a tidy moustache. He had fine features and a striking profile. He received me with a broad smile, greeting me affably in the usual Sikh manner, raising his folded hands chest-high. I got up, dipped my head and, raising my right hand in greeting in an Islamic way, returned his compliment saying "Adab Arz". He beckoned me to resume my seat and himself sat beside me, scanning me sharply, prying into my face and mind searchingly.

"Is there something I can do for you? he asked.

"Yes, just a little bit I shall soon submit. I want a few minutes alone with you", said I.

(On this, he dismissed the children to play).

Giani : What is the little bit?

I : Would you have the goodness to do me a small favour?

Giani : What shall it be?

After a little to and fro, we settled to a preliminary chat. The first talk turned to school. I got around to the point at issue. Soon a full conversation developed. This was how the dialogue went between us in Punjabi :—

I : I have come to seek your help on a matter of some importance. Could I see, through your good offices, my

friend Ajaib Singh, one-time a student in the Khalsa High School?

Giani : (knitting his brow as if reminiscing his pupils).

Which Ajaib Singh? When was he in the school?

I : I mean the Ajaib Singh who was a student in your school about 8/9 years back and who, after passing his Matric Examination, had gone abroad.

Giani : (looked doubtful, wondering just who and what I was. He said:)

The name "Ajaib Singh" is very familiar but I don't seem to place any Ajaib Singh of the brief reference. It is so popular with parents in this part of the country that quite a large number of them give this name to their male children. There are at present at least 3 or 4 students of this name in each class in the school. Thus, there would be about 30 to 40 students of this name in the ten classes of the school at the moment. Calculating at this estimate, between 300 and 400 students having this name must have passed out from the school during the last 9 years. I am teaching school for the better part of twenty years. In the circumstances, it is almost impossible for a teacher like me to place Ajaib Singh of the sort you are looking for.

This Giani looked a man of great wit and wisdom. He was particularly a good wit. For a joke, he gave me a story with a provoking smile :—

"Your enquiry from me about Ajaib Singh is like asking a person returning from a public fair if he had seen there a fellow with a turban on. Who could answer such a question when most of the gathering at the fair comprising several thousand people wore turbans? The question looks like a school boy's prank."

I saw through the sardonic smile, brutal jollity and biting irony, a twinkle and a glint in his eye. He tried to impress me as a man with a grand sense of humour, who could more than hold his own in any battle of wits. He was smiling with ponderous sarcasm and mischievous joy, sizing me up microscopically, taking care at the same time to suppress its distaste to me. His conversation was laced with a gentle acidity. He chuckled to himself like a mischievous school boy as if he had made a fine crackle. He was holding his school stick, trifling with it all the time.

The remark rankled. However, I kept my head and laughed away the joke phlegmatically, fearing lest any tit for tat should turn out to be a risky repartee, heating up into burning my fingers

in a half-baked broth. This was not the time to backslap or trade jokes on him. Sometime, fun spells failure. I was particularly careful not to draw the conversation into the ridiculous. It was possible the Giani might not take a joke in good part in reply to the one made by himself. Therefore, I gave an ingratiating smile and said :—

I : Right you are, Giani Sahib. I appreciate your difficulty but I mean the Ajaib Singh who had visited you on his return from abroad and sought your help in getting him fixed up somewhere, saying that he had had a row with his parents and other relatives at home and would not go back to them.

This was what Ismail had disclosed to me about his last meeting with Ajaib Singh at the Golden Temple, Amritsar. This was what Ismail had omitted to mention in his earlier statements to his interrogators. I noticed that these words rivetted the Giani's attention and raised his eye-brows. He seemed to have discovered from these words that I was not a casual visitor.

This Giani was different from Giani Sardara Singh. He had an intellectual face, an agile mind, a good eye for detection and diviniation, a brain as swift and probing as a rapier. An infinite intelligence and an engaging sparkle gleamed in his eyes and a sterling character in his physical features. He was extremely nosy, wary and watchful, staring significantly at me. He gave me quizzical looks, searched my face all over, his eyes flicking at me all the time. A master by his teaching profession, he was a perfect master-man by the very look of him. All this made me diffident about my depths. I cocked my ears and eyes in top gear.

The confrontation began uneasily for me when he flashed quick glances at me with his great gleaming eyes. To start with, while he looked straight in the eye, I looked everywhere but at him. I met his eyes sparingly. At times, I met them half way and ducked. But I soon caught the twinkle and teasing mockery in his eyes and got at level with him. We now talked mostly with our eyes. Eyes know no bounds. They kept us wise to each other's move. The looks were everything. Sustained stares filled the silent gaps. We searched each other's face so much that the drama warmed up into a full battle of looks and wits and wills and skills. Many a time, we watched each other with an unwinking stare fixedly for seconds on end. Very often, I did nothing beyond returning his stare in silence. His intention seemed to stare me down and study me uninterrupted. Whenever I tried diversion, his big, bull's eyes would dart fresh glances from under his bushy eyebrows. Every single glance was enough to tell me what he thought of me and what I had seen him for. It was all firm lips and intent eyes,

We exercised extreme circumlocution in putting questions and giving answers to each other. We tried topic after topic but the conversation did not flow easily, hedged, as it was, with great caution. We sniffed around each other for quite sometime, each peering intently, expressing mock surprise at every turn of the topic. It was not unoften that we spoke in allegories. It was not easy to scratch the surface and go deeper in such an optical cross-examination.

The Giani was a very pert questioner. He put tantalising questions to check on me and rib me about my past and present credentials vis-a-vis the extent and nature of my connections with Ajaib Singh. As would be presently seen, he shot out and heckled me with queries full of guile. He contrived opportunities to inflict calculated pin-pricks and kept returning to the subject with the stickiness of a typical teacher.

Giani : Where is Ajaib Singh's home?

I : Ajaib Singh had told me that he belonged to a village near Taran Taaran but I have forgotten its name.

Giani : I know one Ajaib Singh. He belonged to village Dinpur. He was a delinquent and a dotard at school.

I : If memory serves me, this was not the name of his village. It was different but not all that different.

(*N. B.*—I knew from my earlier inquiries that the name of Ajaib Singh's village was Kallah. But I also knew that Ismail had not been able to mention the village in any of his statements. Therefore, I, in my interview with the Giani, expressed my inability to recall the village.)

The Giani gave me the impression of a man of many subterfuges, trying to hoax me by giving a wrong name of Ajaib Singh's village. His eyes blinked wickedly studying me with terrific exactitude. I had a hunch from his demeanour that he knew the correct name of the village and yet he was wilfully trying to put me off the tracks in order perhaps to test the extent of my intimacy with Ajaib Singh. I would have, rather should have, corrected him by mentioning Kallah instead of Dinpur, had it been known to Ismail.

Giani : What age was he?

I : I would say 30-plus.

Giani : Who do you mean? The tall boy with a scar on his face?

I : No, not him.

Giani : Any other interesting particulars of his description?

I : Nothing out of the ordinary. He was fair-complexioned, well-built, medium-sized, full-faced, blue-eyed and a stocky youngman.

Giani : Who is your informer?

I : I should have said a little bird told me, had I not known him personally.

Giani : Fine, but how did you get on to me, I wonder? Who gave you my address?

I : I got it from the horse's mouth.

Giani : Who is your horse?

I : Ajaib Singh.

Giani : Some time, horses are the fastest to run away!

I : Yes, some time horses do run away but seldom without the riders. You are the rider in this case (laughter). Ajaib Singh had told me that I should look for him either at Gurdwara Marhana Sahib or through you. I would'nt have come to you if I weren't sure he was with you.

Giani : How does Gurdwara Marhana Sahib bear from Taran Taaran ?

I : It is about 16 miles south-east of here. This is the nearest I can give.

Giani : (smiled obliquely and said).

There is no gurdwara of this name.

I : (The Giani was again trying to talk me out of this venture. While saying this, he gave a sneering smile, making game of what I had told him. Therefore, I promptly replied :—)

You appear to be an ungeographical Giani, blissfully ignorant of an important gurdwara in your district. Your horizon is limited. I already have been to the gurdwara but, failing to find him there, have come to you.

(I had never been to Gurdwara Marhana Sahib but I knew its correct location from the reports made by other Police Officers who had been there in search of Ajaib Singh).

Giani : (said with a tight laugh)

You are right. My geography is a little awry !

But Ajaib Singh must have peddled my name wrongly.

I : No, I am sure I have placed you correctly.

Giani : What is your name ?

(This question brought my identity under a dazzling search-light. Keeping in view the trend of the confrontation, I now decided to impersonate Ismail and personate for myself his role as Ajaib Singh's accomplice, a deshbhaghat which is a political shorthand for a selfless patriot. The assumption of this role by me was an indispensable expedient intended to worm my way into the Giani's confidence. This was something of an accident as it was not in the original plan. It is not easy to be anything else other than oneself or to counterfeit oneself into another person, look like him or talk like him. It was difficult to pretend to be anything I was not. This was, however, a contingency for which every policeman chasing a game is always supposed to be prepared. A policeman is a man-of-all jobs. If an executive knows something about everything it is the police. It is the police that is very often required to play snap roles, and comport themselves off hand in diverse and adverse circumstances. Extempore decision-making and risk-taking are among a policeman's commonest responsibilities. He should have the penetration to foresee the coming needs. He should know how to adapt his face, bearing and voice to a surprise situation and assume an impenetrable disguise. It is, however, very rare that he has to disguise his appearance by the addition of false hair or adhesive moustaches. At any rate, care is particularly taken to look natural. Luckily for me, except for my hair being slightly flecked with grey, I had almost the same statistics, height and weight, as Ismail. But unluckily, Ismail and I were fairly apart in age. While I had turned 35 in 1942, he just ticked 29. My grey hair was sure to betray the gap. How to snip this difference off, disguise my age and look of an age with Ismail was quite a snag. This was how I met the situation on the spur of the moment).

I : (said I, rising).

"What is in a name ? Please let it all go unsaid. Please let me go. You know nothing about my friend".

(*N.B.*—Naturally, I took time to announce myself as a friend of Ajaib Singh. Dots and dashes and stares and blanks are the natural concomitants punctuating a conversation between a stranger and a spy and generate immense inquisitiveness. It was why I

wilfully dodged the question to give him the impression that I was Ajaib Singh's confidant and would, as such, naturally shy away and hardly flaunt my correct identity readily to a stranger like the Giani. The real Ismail could not be so clumsy as to go blurting out his correct identity. This dilly-dallying on my part was intended to trick him into the belief that I was really some mysteryman out on some secret mission. He tugged at my shirt, asking me in a compelling voice) :—

Giani : Please do sit down ; it is very hot yet. I wonder how did you get to know Ajaib Singh ?

I : We came together.

Giani : From where ?

I : From abroad.

Giani : How?

I : From above.

Giani : When ?

I : About six months back.

(*N.B.*—I did not elaborate nor did the Giani ask for clarification of the words "abroad" or "from above". He did not ask me the how, the when or the why of all this ! All this rang a bell with me and tickled my imagination, giving, as it did, tenuous hints that he was Ajaib Singh's confidant. If he actually did not know Ajaib Singh or his mission, as he was throughout trying to give out, he should have straightaway asked me what I meant by these cryptic allegories. His convenient omission to ask for further comments indicated that he knew the inside story and that he was observing discreet silence about the whole affair. He interlarded his conversation with oblique references to the real context. I was sure he was trying me out for somebody, obviously checking on the tie-up between Ajaib Singh and myself).

Giani : You won't mind all this, I hope ?

I : No, I am really very happy to take your questions.

Giani : Where and when did you meet him last?

I : Golden Temple, Amritsar, not quite five months ago.

Giani : What is your name ?

I : Please let me remain anonymous.

Giani : But why ?

I : Nothing in particular.

Giani : I suppose you must be a Muslim?

I : Yes, I am. Please leave it at that.

Giani : But why? I should know the good name of the gentleman I am talking to.

I : (With an air of reluctant conciliation and hesitation). I am Ajaib Singh's fellow-idler.

Giani : And the good name?

I : My name is Muhammad Ismail (said I obligingly after considerable temporisation).

Giani : (Stared at me unbelievingly and asked). Why do you want to see Ajaib Singh ?

I : He is always good company, a firm friend with an understanding heart.

Giani : Is he married ?

I : Nothing that I know of.

Giani : Are you married yourself?

I : Yes, I am.

Giani : Which is your home ?

(This question again showed his avid interest in me and my identity. He was deeply keen in pursuing the talk. I had by now made the grade and rammed my mission into his head in a subtle way to such an extent that I felt he won't let me go even if I were to decline to answer his question or beg leave of him. Therefore, I not only did not answer the question but also stood up and begged leave of him as follows) :

I : You know nothing about my comrade, Ajaib Singh. May I know where Giani Kartar Singh lives ? I want to see him in this connection.

(But before I could turn to go, matters mended. The Giani's eyes gleamed with holy delight. His face beamed and broke into a benevolent smile. He looked at me trustfully and in a smooth and persuasive voice, asked :)

Giani : Please sit down. Giani Kartar Singh is a young teacher and knows very little about old boys. You seem to be a deshbhagat. I have tremendous respect for people like you. "Deshbhagat" is a name to conjure with anywhere in our country these days. To see deshbhagats is to like them. I trust them at sight. The very label says it all. If any body in the world, I trust them most. They are the real men for the job, the nicest people one can meet these days. To be

sure, you are a wonderful asset. It is a privilege to know a deshbhagat. I am lucky to make your acquaintance. How thoughtful of you to give me the pleasure of a salutary visit. How welcome is your coming. I am delighted to meet you. I love you for yourself and your mission. You can count upon me at this cardinal moment. You are a pioneer in the vanguard of our heroic and historic struggle for independence. You take me for Ajaib Singh. He is nearly a son to me.

(I now positively discovered from all this that Giani Sewa Singh was the obvious man through whom Ajaib Singh was in hiding and that he had accepted me completely as a deshbhagat and Ajaib Singh's confidant. Things seemed looking up. My first effort was to gain a beachhead. I got it. I got a corner-stone of my adventure. The Giani showed an immense gesture of devotion in deshbhagats. He found in me a satisfactory material for the part I was playing. I, therefore, sat down with a sigh of relief, saying :)

I : Thank you. It is very assuring to meet you. I am no less proud to have the pleasure of your acquaintance. How lucky I am to find myself in your holy hands. I feel right at home here.

(We assured each other that it was an honour and a pleasure to make each other's acquaintance).

Giani : How matters stand with you ? You were to go home ?

(This question showed more clearly that the Giani knew that after his departure from Ajaib Singh at the Golden Temple, Amritsar, Ismail was to go home straightway. I had now no doubt in my mind that Ajaib Singh had told the Giani all that had transpired between him and Ismail. In the circumstances, I, feeling that I should not contradict what Ajaib Singh had already told him, re-assured him, saying :)

I : Yes, I was very keen to meet my mother and had gone home. I held my breath when I came to know that the Police were about, screening all repatriates from abroad. May be the police had been to see me. Fearing lest I should be on the Police books and mugged and bugged by some vicious police officer, I laid low and left the place when the hunt died away. I fled my home during the night without anybody knowing anything about my arrival or departure. I have since scuttled across the country in assorted disguises. I have simply been swept here by the winds in this

unsteady world. I am on the run, earning my living at odd jobs, a tramp, weak aud weary, having broken bread, looking shabby, clad casually in a negligee, spending deadly days and nights at obscure places, without adequate board or lodging, a man without any fixed address and without any changes of clothes. I am a refugee from both law and life. But it is no fun to be always on the run when there is nowhere to go. Many a time I have led the garden-bench life. I have come to your door no better than a fickle gypsy, a beggar, penniless and homeless in my home country for the country. I am without any job or future, a discredit to my family but not to my country. I cannot work steadily at one place. I can work only by the job under one cover or another. I have now little living expense, almost nothing to go with. Money means bread and board and I have none. I am now short so much as a pice. I am a hunted, homeless pauper, through with this weary wandering, leading a feckless and lonely life filled with despair. I travel light. I live light. I can live, if less be possible, with a less. Mine is now a sorry story, a tired traveller's tale, traumatic experience painfully relieved in the telling. It would be quite some time before I could re-arrange my life and fend for myself financially.

(The Giani scooped some money from one of his pockets and went through another for more. But I nodded refusal, though I continued to feign disease and distress).

I am unwell but I can't go to a hospital to take a cure. I am too starved out and skinny to throw a shadow. And yet I travel much of the time. This has, as you can see for yourself, told upon my health so much that I have gone grey at the temples, with streaks on the head, aging fast beyond my years prematurely. I have two pre-school children but being on the run I can make no time for them. I have begun to realize that I am entirely alone in this vast world. But we must not put our private comfort ahead of our national need. All deshbhagats live in stunning simplicity. In fact, it is the poor people who want to serve and save this country and bear such hardships. A golden opportunity is looming large. We will not allow the opportunity to go waste. We cannot wait any longer. The great day has arrived. It is time that Britishers, these throat-slitters, were thrown out of the country. The crisis is gathering. The ace problem of emancipation of the country is nearing solution. The revolutionary movement has made a tremendous impact on the people.

(I talked hard times and said all this because I was greyer than Ismail. One does not grow grey overnight. Ismail was in his late twenties. It was why I was mentally preparing the Giani so that he could convince Ajaib Singh that the man, who claimed to be Ismail and wanted to see him, answered the description of Ismail. I was trying to satisfy him with my verbal identification and belie my age by a made-up explanation).

Giani : Did anything happen when you came from above ?

(This was a clever question and it made me feel that I had got the pitch. It spoke volumes of the Giani's knowledge of the mission. In fact, he was still verifying my contacts with Ajaib Singh and my complicity with his mission. While doing so, he was incidentally exposing his own contacts with Ajaib Singh. To my mind, he was making guarded admissions. The case seemed taking shape. To his question as to what had happened at the time of our landing, I said :)

I : Yes, there is a story in it and it is worth the telling. An incident took place on our landing. We were dropped about day-break on the out-skirts of a village outside a jungle in Assam. The villagers took fright and ran helter skelter. We hastened towards the thick of the jungle for fear of being found out. We picked our way to a railway station and travelled to Patna. We separated, meeting for the last time at the Golden Temple.

(While I was narrating the incident, the Giani nodded foreknowledge with a face beaming satisfaction at the veracity of my account. This again indicated the extent and depth of his knowledge of the affair).

I : Kindly arrange my meeting with Ajaib Singh.

Giani : Please make yourself comfortable; have a bath, food and rest.

(He seemed a pleasant family man. He played the good host, edged close to me and asked me to a meal in an effort to create for me an atmosphere of unpretentious homeliness. But I twisted my face into an expression of indisposition and said)

I : No, thanks. As I have already told you, I have been feeling sick and seedy. I am still not too well to take a bath or any food other than that of my own choice.

(For the look of it, I carried a small phial of medicine in support of my assertion of ill-health. I coughed pretty hard !

adding I suffered from a persistently hacking and racking cough ! I also pleaded fatigue. All this because I was in a confected masquerade. Though I always knew where my revolver was, I was careful enough not to walk into a trap with my eyes open. I was wearing a revolver next my skin, tucked underneath my shirt and, as such, I could not put off my clothes for a bath or go inside his house fearing lest (*i*) the Giani should see the revolver or (*ii*) Ajaib Singh might be ensconcing himself inside to see for himself who I was. The fear uppermost in my mind was that he wanted to talk to me with Ajaib Singh at his elbow. Besides, I, as Ismail, could not be expected to carry a revolver in view of the fact that the one supplied by the Japanese had been lost at the time of landing in Assam. I was in the drivers seat, very wary and circumspect. I was careful to move slowly and not to show my hand. Any step out of character would have meant trouble beyond redemption. My fear was lest a chance slip should betray me or I should run out of excuses unless I could invent fresh ones *ex*-tempore. I was also worried lest the failure of my venture should disintegrate my standing with the department or make the problem any worse than it already was).

Giani : I can prepare you food of your choice and taste.

I : No, I can't wait. I am on the move.

Giani : (set a table, offered liquid hospitality).

How about a beer, just a peg or two ? It will do you a lot of good.

I : No, thank you very much. Intoxicants are among my favourite dislikes.

Giani : Well, I know your religious inhibitions. I meant it by way of medicine only. Help yourself to water-melons.

I : No, these too are not to my likes. As I just said, I am a man with a wobbly health.

Giani : I will bring you a whole selection of food to enable you to make a choice to your taste.

I : So nice of you, indeed ; but, as before, I beg to be excused.

Giani : Have tea.

I : (Sat down to a table set for me, poured myself a cup and drank it at one gulp. It was good of its sort).

Giani : What is your education.

I : (I was not primed for this uncomfortable question. I had read Ismail's statement from cover to cover but did not know, rather did not remember, his education. I ducked the question, dipped my face a little, dimpled

into a broad smile and gave an artfully evasive reply in gritty Punjabi softly) :—

Asan Jattan de putran nen ki parn nan ae ? Ath nan hoa Thas : Thas nan hoa Baran.

(What education can we, sons of Jats (farmers), have ? If not eight, ten, if not ten, twelve !).

The Giani took this for the good answer. I hedged the question by laughing it off. I was purposely ambiguous and turned the question with such a smile that the Giani did not pursue his query any further or ask whether I was educated up to the 8th, the 10th or the 12th standard ! I later checked it with Ismail and he set me straight, telling that he was educated up to the 10th standard. In fact, my smile and style satisfied and silenced the Giani. He appeared to be mollified by my explanation. It was a perfect answer and saved the situation. I felt to have come out fine when I was perilously clo·e to being found out, had I not fudged the answer to the barbed question in my own way. Any flaw in fluency would have involved a brush with death.

Situations give words meanings not found in any dictionary. Never before had I appreciated as much difference between a smile, a speech and silence as now in the context of the confrontation. Silence may be the safest answer of an accused denying his guilt before a person in author.ty but not of one, in my pose, trying to convince the probable harbourer of the spy that sitting before him was an accomplice of that spy. Silence is gold to the wise. But I would have been a fool to ape the wise and hanker after gold in keeping silence in confrontation. Silence in confrontation with the harbourer would have led to detection and decapitation of any imposter in my position. Silence has contradictory connotations in such situations ; fear, ignorance, indecision, pensiveness, denial, consent, co-operation, non-co-operation or nothing at all. A smile, on the other hand, symbolises one thing only : cordiality, friendliness. Friends seldom interrogate friends. While silence provokes questioning, a smile is a good guile, a handy sugar-coat for the bitterest pills, a winsome answer, a speechless speech. Metaphorically, a smile is as golden as silence. It is as expressive as a speech. And yet a smile is neither silence nor a speech. Unlike silence, it says something but, unlike a speech, it makes no commitment. It is neither one nor the other but a mean with common advantages and uncommon disadvantages. It stood me in very good stead. It saved the situation better than any discreet silence or a clever speech could do.

The question about my education put me on my guard. I tried broken English on the Giani and stumbled with quite a few tit bits to convince him that I had little English, limited to a

handful of words and that I was just that, not much behind a Giani in bad English. For his part, the Giani spoke Baboo English fluently free from all trammels of grammar !

(The conversation rambled over a wide range but now I wanted to be short with him, do it fast and do it well at little cost).

I : Giani Ji, when can I expect to meet Ajaib Singh ? Could I see him, if possible, today, or, if necessary, tomorrow ? You will please tell him in my name to see me at once.

Giani : I shall try to arrange your meeting with Ajaib Singh at my house at 6 o'clock in the evening today.

I took a rapid survey of the premises with seeming carelessness. There was too much to see and stare in the small place. Moreover, it was summer, late June, and the time was unrealistic and inopportune ; 6 o'clock meant broad-day light. For obvious reasons, I should not meet Ajaib Singh by day. Any meeting during day-time involved the possibility of my identity being found out by Ajaib Singh and giving him an opportunity to sidle through a substantial screen of tall trees and lush wild greenary all round. He might spy me before I could reach out. Another second and he would disappear. I did not want to take any such chances as he had already defied all efforts made by the Police to track him down. There was still another reason against the suggested time. It was 4 o'clock by that time. I wanted time to contact the local police and arrange a raid. Therefore, I immediately said :)

Giani Ji, I thank you for this welcome meeting but knowing, as you do, the nature of our mission, I do not want to jeopardise your position by seeing my friend at your house during day-time. Would it not be better to see him some time tonight?

Giani : I agree. Make it 9 o'clock tonight. Will it suit you?

I : (I again visualised the risk. I reckoned that though it would be dark by that time, the Giani had a big and beastly watch-dog nightly on the unleash. The dog was only a few shades darker than his sallow-complexioned master. I feared the dog's nose. It ambled around me, smelling at me all the time. It was a hound of sorts, prancing and barking enough to make one freeze in the scorching heat. Though I kept cool as if brave with dogs, I felt that a little sound of steps of the raiding party in the soft and quiet night would bring him to his heels. He might savage us if we, finding him troublesome, tried to slip away. The dog's bark alone would be more dangerous than his bite)

I : How is your dog? He seems to me very vicious.

Giani : No, I have a very kindly dog. Please pardon his presence; he is just playful. You should not grudge him a little exercise !

I : To me, the dog had given a biting welcome !

Giani : The dog is invariably so with every stranger before he is formally introduced to a fresh arrival ! I am sorry for the bite but he isn't a diseased dog, for sure.

(The Giani's explanation, even if satisfactory about the dog, could not cover another risk. It would be an immaculately starlit night. The house, though near the main road, opened into huge fields and placid and verdant meadows on two sides. It was nestled in a thickly shrubbery with a goodly scattering of huts and hamlets on the third side. This being so, I feared lest the raiding party should lose the way or lose the man over the vast sameness at night.

Moreover, the house was steeped in rural silence against a back-drop of man-high country crops and over-grown surroundings. It looked out upon the fields by some half a dozen windows. It had a delightfully disciplined orchard lined with potted plants in front where one could easily crouch and conceal unseen. The orchard was dripping heavy with fruit. The back-yard too was rimmed with fruit trees, silhoutted green against the blue sky.

The dog deployed at such an intriguing house might wreck the whole edifice. He might bay us and alert everybody. Ajaib Singh might suspect an ambush and, feeling that it could not be Ismail coming with an army, would sneak out the back-door, again go down a rat hole, get out of shot and disappear into the night like a shadow. He might sprout off cross-country like a scalded cat, bolt down a dark corner and vanish into the sky. Like a deer that has heard a crackle in the brush, he might ease away across the roof or even shoot past us unnoticed at night and make a getaway for good. If this happened, no amount of any more labour to scour the overgrowth would be worth anything to ferret him out in the foreseeable future. There would not be one more chance in a million to catch him once he showed a clear pair of heels.

Briefly, I felt that the Giani's house which stood back a little from the road hidden by clusters of tufted trees was a place where I had many opportunities to be indiscreet.)

I : Giani Sahib, how graceful you are. I must again thank you for offering your house as our meeting place. I must confess that your house is a swell place for the purpose. But on second thoughts I am averse to using

it as a rendezvous for underground workers. Two spies is a lot for one host. You are all sweetness, a gentleman after my own heart. I have now no secrets from you. You are so kind and co-operative that I shall congratulate Ajaib Singh on having found in you a never-failing friend, a sincere helper and a true patriot. You are the only one I would trust. I should, therefore, be the last person to involve you in a matter such as this. In the circumstances, I would request you to fix some place in the town of Taran Taaran where I can meet Ajaib Singh unnoticed some time tonight.

(I wanted a sure and swift success. For this, it was necessary to have a discreet place in the town where a raiding party could be arranged unseen. The Giani replied :—)

Giani : No, I am sorry I cannot think of, much less arrange, any such place in the town.

(We paused and pondered over the selection of a suitable place for about five minutes. An atmosphere of friendliness permeated the place. Suggestions were made and countered on one ground or the other).

I : Well, Giani Sahib, you have more local knowledge. I leave it to you. You pick any place.

Giani : I make you a proposal. What about the waiting hall of the Taran Taaran Railway Station?

I : Good, and the time?

Giani : 9-15 p.m. Is this all right?

I : Yes ; it is better that way.

(I left the initiative about the place and time to the Giani, requesting for a change only if it did not suit a successful trap. The intention was to give him no cause for suspicion by any word or act smelling of over-enthusiasm or abnormality on my part. An adventurer, like a beggar, should not be a chooser unless his mission and security are in jeopardy. I was careful not to overplay my hand. Anything that could be considered too eager or out of character was avoided. Care was taken to make the approach as subtle and natural as was humanly possible in the given circumstances. Every effort was made to impress the Giani that I was a stranger to the place and the people around. I wanted a sure shot. But I did not know Ajaib Singh from Adam. The description given by Ismail was too sketchy to allow for certainty. The place was, as it is, strongly Sikh. Beards and long hair are so common in a Sikh locality that they make a convenient disguise for any member of the community. Nature never makes two faces precisely alike

but she came very near it among these people. The majority of them look duplicates of one another. They are particularly alike enough to be doubles at night. Unless one had heard a Sikh speak or met him face to face, one couldn't be sure of his identity. This being so, I was doubtful I could place Ajaib Singh by his tell-tale description or by my mental notes from his old photo by night. Therefore, I felt that it would be easier to spot him at night if the Giani came along with him. He stood six feet tall, a conspicuous height anywhere. As I had gone up several notches in his confidence, I requested him as follows) :—

I : Giani Sahib, you may as well come along. You are so sweet and I so eagerly desire your company that I would welcome another opportunity of seeing you. This is no base flattery. This is no eulogy. It is just out of the fullness of my heart that I want to meet you again. As you know the nature of our mission, I would naturally be hiding myself in some obscure corner of the station. Therefore, when you and Ajaib Singh reach the waiting hall, please take your seats on the bench near the water-tap and shout for me, calling me by some assumed name. I would be around for the asking.

Giani : I agree. I will come with Ajaib Singh. We would announce ourselves by calling you by the pseudonym "Ram Parkash".

I : Thank you very much for all this interest. I shall beg leave of you now. You reach the third class waiting hall and there I shall be. I would be in a place of concealment within an earshot of the appointed point.

Giani : It is nearly 4 o'clock now. Where will you remain all this time? Why don't you rest here?

I : I am profoundly grateful to you for so much hospitality. I will tell Ajaib Singh that you are a good man to know, as good as your profession and reputation. I will congratulate him for having in you the right person full of consideration, sympathy, affection and patriotism. You were too close to lunch to talk to a stranger like me when I came to you today and yet you skipped it for me. You are so endlessly noble that I would rather call you by an alliteration name—Sant (saint) Sewa Singh. But knowing as you do that I am staking my life and all for the country, I have to keep moving, going about in the wilderness. I stay at one place only briefly. I should not stay at your house another minute. Therefore, I hope you won't mind my inability to

remain with you any longer or to tell you my movements between now and our next meeting at the railway station. After all, this is our first meeting and I am what you know I am, shuffling away even from a shadow. I hope you won't mind my outspokenness. Please let me go. I shall look forward to seeing you and Ajaib Singh at the railway station.

(The Giani agreed and gave his blessings to my patriotic mission !)

This was my first abrasive confrontation with the Giani. The talk was delicately poised for some 90 uncomfortable minutes. A policeman should be able to hold his own in confrontation and give instant replies. I ran the gauntlet of his critical questions with great care and composure. He did all he could to bewilder me and force errors on me with titters of laughter. He put loaded questions asking me more than I knew. He kept all my five senses frightfully busy in top gear throughout, in particular the eyes, the ears and the tongue. I was happy that he was satisfied with my "impeccable credentials" and that I had given him less than I got. I left false trails. I was transported with anticipatory pleasure, exultant with a flurry of hopes, brimming with confidence that my plan was taking shape and the track going great. Each minute seemed rewarding. The possibility hardened into a fact from the promising prelude to the actual drama. All this tickled my humour. His prompt promise to place me in touch with Ajaib Singh put me in good heart. I felt to have got into the game at full stride almost from the beginning. A small key appeared to have opened a big door. I was serenely confident that now my success would not be merely accidental but absolutely imminent and inevitable. The adventure had a good going. The direction and destiny of my mission were now clearly visible. What was moments before an audacious dream was now all hope and expectation, a matter of shrinking time. The problem seemed in sight of speedy solution as the development had all the essentials of success. The game seemed to be in my bag and I was now as certain of it as the rising sun. Success seemed just round the corner, right or left was to be seen after negotiating the bend.

IV—THE SPY SLIPS THROUGH MY FINGERS

I left the Giani for the railway station via the town. As before, the dog again started barking ferociously after me. I soon got off his range. I had to go a good way. I was a tremendous walker. The slow start soon developed into a brisk walk, ultimately breaking into a run. It was still blazing hot. I was sun-soaked in a lather of sweat and distressed with raging thirst. No cold drinks were available on the way to slake it.

I sneaked back glances over my shoulders to ensure that the Giani or one of his emissaries was not on my tail. I was satisfied that no prying eyes were around.

I soon found myself in the town. I punched my way through crowds on bustling points. Criss-cross traffic swishing past me without any road sense. A cyclist and a pedestrian crashed into me one after the other and then proceeded without so much as a word. A policeman helped the pedestrian across a street. It was on this street that somebody accosted me by name. I had no acquaintances at the place. I spun round on the voice to find a Sikh Sub-Inspector of Police in uniform. We knew each other from our days in Lahore. I was anxious no one saw me who knew me. The one constant nightmare of a spy is of being seen by someone who knew him before. Therefore, I slipped past him and assiduously tried to shun meeting him but he saw me at the top of a street and enquired: "How gloomy and grave you seem. Is anything the matter?" It was no time to make excuses to him. I was very much disconcerted on being accosted by a Police Officer in uniform at a place and time at which I was playing the role of a spy. I had an intuition of a deadly danger of exposure in case the Giani or some of his men saw me talking to a Police Officer. The key question would be: how does this transit passenger know the police ? Ismail, whose role I was playing, was not supposed to know a policeman in Taran Taaran. I was worried lest someone might make inquiries from the Sub-Inspector about my identity. Unless he were specifically warned he would have, of course quite innocently, disclosed my identity to any person interested to know it. Therefore, I

refused to look at him and scampered into a lane. He kept up with me for several paces as if to check it up with me. I again tried to shake him off by hastily turning corner after corner. But he stepped out in an effort to catch up with me. At last, I waved him off from the corner of a lane not to come after me. He took the hint and left me alone.

I quickly disappeared into the byelanes and back-streets, slowing down at times to catch my breath. I took a detour through a maze of streets and cruised them about a good while in the comparatively less populated part of the town, rounding corner after corner. It was a small, unpretentious and uninspiring Sikh town set in the countryside with a resident population of around ten thousand, a ramshackle, dull and drab place with narrow, fetid streets, seething and stinking in the summer season. As I learnt later, it was a vibrant town on Sundays, a village on other days, tucking itself away for the night at 8 p.m. It was, as it is, refurbished by Massia, a Sikh mass festival held every month when it bustled and burst into colour, glowing with excitement. The whole town and its countryside is out for the religious festival when people come in busloads and by special trains in great swarms for a swim, a sacred bath for the laving of body and soul in the holy water of a tank meant for the purpose. It seemed to be a town of the future. But at the moment, the back streets were empty in the heat of the day. I went down a quiet street, reminiscing this was the place where my prey had been educated and it might be here that I would presently round him up. Slowly I treaded my weary and wary way, going over my plans how to catch him.

At about 6 o'clock I repaired to the railway station. I scanned the waiting hall. It had fairly high railings on three sides and a wide-open gate on the fourth. It was difficult enough to leap the railings or bolt across the gate, if adequately manned. But it was a concourse hall, congested and overcrowded. This was something which might help or harm the trap, depending upon the exigencies of the crucial moment.

I now went to the Railway Police Post to arrange a trap, relying on the bare chance that Ajaib Singh might show up. I learnt that the Head Constable incharge of the Police Post was away in Amritsar and that he would be back by the evening train.

The Head Constable, a tall young Hindu, was seen coming out of the railway station at about 7-30 p.m. I took him aside and briefed him on the situation. I told him that I was an officer of the Provincial C. I. D. on a secret duty. I told him that I wanted him to assist me in the arrest of a man who was

expected at the third class waiting hall at about 9-15 p.m. He had a staff of three constables. I told him that he and his staff in plain clothes should be on hand at a fair distance away, coming near me only when I gave them a signal. I did not disclose full particulars of the man to any of the eager-beaver policemen.

Though the Giani looked good enough to be genuine and had gone too far to go back on it, yet I had a premonition. I visualised the possibility of his coming alone without being able to find or fetch Ajaib Singh. In such an event, it was possible that the Police cordon, unless they were clearly instructed, might misunderstand my signal and arrest the wrong man, Giani, who was not my target. I, therefore, instructed the Head Constable to depute some of his men to act as lookouts during my talk with the fresh arrival and not to come near us unless I addressed him: "Aiyae" (come). I told him that the word "Aiyae" would be a shibboleth for him and his staff to come and arrest him. To be explicit, I told him that he and his staff should stay away from us if I did not use this code word. This was how I, while hoping for the best, prepared for the worst.

I knew that the Giani and Ajaib Singh would be intent upon the waiting hall directly they arrived at the railway station. I didn't want to meet them in a crowded place. Therefore, I discussed with the Head Constable the advisability of deploying a constable in plain-clothes to act as a decoy inside the hall. As decided, we put a constable at a suitable point with necessary instructions. However, I warned him to withdraw the constable and deploy the contingent immediately suitably if I chose to shift the stage to some point inside the railway platform. I reconnoitred the entire railway premises to meet every contingency. By comparison, I felt that but for the previous arrangement made with the Giani, the waiting hall did not provide as good an observatory, secrecy and security as the platform.

An anxious interval followed. Seconds, then minutes ticked away with a mounting tension. Like a man-in-the-street anxious to see a distinguished dignitary, I waited for my man by the kerb breathlessly. I took the watch in the deep shade of the gateway, peering out into the distance, scanning and stalking. It was a balmy, crisp moonlit night. The glare of the moon shone in all its splendour, casting an eerie light over the platform. The wind again rose at the fall of the night. I had partly covered my face and one could scarcely make me out in the shadows. I was looking forward tensely with mixed feelings of confidence and anxiety obsessed by urgency and eagerness. The agony of expectation was extremely mortifying. I had had immense excitement,

feeling I was getting mighty close to achieving the acme of my desire.

The apprehended happened. My elation and facile and unruffled optimism subsided too soon. I was the happiest man only for five short hours. My premonition came true. I found that I was not wrong in my prognosis. This was one of the cases in which it would be capital folly to be too sure of the count of one's chickens before they were hatched. In fact, one should never be overly optimistic in a hunt for outlaws.

"The highest rapture lasts only for a moment" . . . . . Oliver Goldsmith.

The happiest interlude vanished too soon, sooner than a moment.

The Giani came alone slouching along precisely on schedule. There was nobody with him or near him. To meet such a situation, I was already crouching in a dark corner of the gateway. I saw him heading for the water-tap in the third class waiting hall. I ducked back in the shadow and, when he came within earshot, asked him in a very low but audible tone to come to where I was. I noticed that, in spite of this, he moved about like a suspicious prowler bent upon going towards the waiting hall under the glare of light persuading me to follow suit. I suspected that Ajaib Singh might be snooping around to see who I was and that it was why the Giani, in order to show me to him, was trying to take me to the lighted spot. I, therefore, insisted by a constrained gesture that he should come my way. Again, he was hesitant and again I pressed my point in a whisper when he came within speech. At last, he came and joined me in the almost dark doorway. Passengers scurried to and fro. We squeezed past the passengers and hurried out into the inside. I offered to walk him to the platform as far away from the waiting hall as I could without giving him the impression that I was doing this intentionally. I, however, noticed that he was trying to make me sit with him on one of the wooden benches at the platform near a lamp post. This further added to my uneasy feeling that Ajaib Singh was most probably nosing around somewhere closeby and that the Giani wanted to enable him to eavesdrop on our conversation, identify me by face or by voice. I was, therefore, keen to counter all such moves by keeping a distance from all conceivable approaches by an eavesdropper. I wanted to sneak him to a blind corner where we could have a quick and quiet talk unseen and unheard by prying eyes and straining ears. I told him we should talk the matter over to better purpose in the dark. We treaded our

way to the remotest and darkest corner of the platform where, I felt, we would be out of hearing. A distant lamp post glinted a dim light from behind us. I kept my furtive eyes around. The Head Constable and his staff were hanging about, of course unobstrusively, edging away from us, waiting for a signal from me. There was no such signal and they kept away.

I : I was right in counting on the exactitude of a teacher of your stamp. You have come with the precision of a watch to the very exact second.

Giani : Yes, I have.

I warned him, in advance, to hold his voice and talk to me under his breath closely. But while I had a muffled and patchy conversation and hardly spoke above a whisper, he talked in full earshot of a possible prowler around. He was half talking to me, half stealing looks in the direction of the railing. I had throughout the persistent feeling and cold fear that the Giani would hold me in conversation till such time as Ajaib Singh was able to steal a look at me or recognise me by my voice that I was not Ismail. I tugged gently at his shirt to stop him from loud talking. "Please speak lower", said I. But he continued. I had to raise my finger every now and then to request silence. But he would relapse into loud talk and again I would admonish silence. At last, I gave him a surreptitious dig with my elbow. He desisted. I assumed a listening attitude, looking into his face wistfully, expecting him to break the news about my meeting with Ajaib Singh.

Gani : (Absolutely non-chalant, with a pucker between his brows, he gave me the dreaded answer:)

Ajaib Singh is not traceable. My inquiries have drawn blank. He has gone away long ago, leaving no address.

I : (I gave a small smile in disbelief).

If it is not asking you too much, which places have you checked for him ?

Giani : I had been seeing him every few days upto two months ago. I have seen very little of him nor have I had any news of him since. I regretfully do not know his present whereabouts.

(I was convinced he was giving me an ingenious dodge, taking refuge in absolute lies. His talk was apparently all bluster, aimed at falsifying his earlier commitment. The talk was vague and evasive, oozing with chinks. I feigned surprise and, with visible disappointment in my tone, said:)

I : What in the world are you saying, Giani Sahib? I am shocked to hear you say this. What you say now falls strangely upon my ears, being different from what you had told me earlier. I am sorry not to see him come.

Giani : I regret my inability to say anything more. If there is anything I can do, I'm right here.

I : Bad luck; I can't get on to him when we should have met urgently. I have all this time been sulking in odd places at odd times. It is singularly unfortunate that I should miss him at this critical and crucial juncture. Would you give the matter another thought ?

Giani : (Shrugging his shoulders).
No, I can't. I would if I could.

I : Where do you think he would be ?

Giani : I just don't know. He has many friendships in this region. However, playing the role, as he does, of a spy, there just isn't any place for him to go.

I refused to bring myself to believe him. His bobing voice lacked assurance and gave the lie to his words. His lips, eyes and face told me everything. He gave the disappointing news by his looks. His hypocritical behaviour clinched my suspicions. I had no doubt that he was now evidently trying to beat a hasty retreat, unsaying what he had earlier said to me at his house. It was not possible to divine his intentions but it was evident he was not giving me his whole mind. He knew that I knew he was telling lies. All that he was giving out now was surface stuff, too obvious a manoeuvre, a wicked lie, too good to be true. It was unthinkable and unbelievable that after having himself made a clear disclosure about his latest contacts with Ajaib Singh, he could neither meet him nor find out his present whereabouts. I suspected a hoax. I had a subconscious conviction that he was putting on an act and that he would not drop the mask unless he was thoroughly grilled. I kept nagging him and tried all sorts of persuasion and pleading to get him to tell me what he knew about the man. I found it difficult to draw him out or talk him out of his insistence on ignorance about his where-abouts. He was talking casually, circumnavigating the real issue, going all round it without ever coming to it. He either gave trenchant replies bristling with blatant lies or simply hummed and hawed without a thaw. His earlier enthusiasm had noticeably waned. He did all he could to put me off the scent, create a halo of haze and reduce visibility. He dismissed the subject and switched on to irrelevant and inconsequent subjects or gave blank stares with infuriating

silence. I was first inclined to tell him "Good Giani, your story does not hang together". But then I felt that this was not the occasion to cross swords with him. I listened to him in disapproving silence.

All this put me on inquiry. I was wildly curious to find out what was at the back of this volte face. I fell into a brooding hell. I was convinced that something was really wrong somewhere. But there was no knowing what it was. I was racked by the chilling fear that my identity was under suspicion. The suspicion seemed tenable. I also lived with the knawing apprehension of seepage of my mission. My heart missed beats as I could not get it out of my mind and bannish the nagging doubt that my pose had been exposed. I was all the time suffused in self-doubt. I got to thinking what might have transpired between the Giani and Ajaib Singh. The kernel of my grim dilemma was my uneasy suspicion of a hook-up between the two. I wondered pensively what they thought of me. I had a morbid fear of some villainy behind the sudden shift in the situation. It was difficult to overcome my doubts. What tormented me was the deadly danger of exposure of my false pose. It was a superb test of endurance and I kept my composure. I kept my misgivings about myself to myself. I decided in my mind that whatever the truth and whatever my lies about my identity or the Giani's lies about Ajaib Singh, my face should retain its immobility. A firm face makes a fiction a fact. Whatever the doubts about one's identity may be, one should continue to act naturally without giving away the fact that one is shamming. I should not relax or drop my guard even if it were found out that I was not Ismail. I should continue to conduct myself as if I was. This was not the time to trim my sails or depart even a fraction from the pose I had already taken up. Any slip would make suspicion more suspicious. If I faltered, I would be held for a guilty conscience. It is human psychology that a uniform behaviour, however false or assumed it may be, goes a long way in dispelling lurking suspicions. On the other hand, any indication or a feeling of having been found out is self-deception, substantiating and strengthening a suspicion. Therefore, I decided to hold tenaciously on my course with conceited confidence and continue to bear myself as Ismail when another man, with the feeling to have been found out, would have thrown up the sponge. Subsequent developments showed that I was perfectly correct in my decision and demeanour.

The Giani was drily polite and expressed mock concern about me.

Giani : What are you going to do with yourself?

I : I shall slack around or leave for nowhere incognito.

Giani : Where will you stay the night?

I : Nowhere.

Giani : Why not accompany me home?

I : No, I can't, said I apologetically, knowing, as you do, my difficulties as a deshbhagat who, with a wander lust fort he sake of his homeland, does not stay at home. A deshbhagat finds no pleasure in leisure. I carry my life in my hands, I never drop my guard. I am careful to approach even a shadow with great delicacy. Our enemies would do anything to compass our destruction. I want to be where I could be least expected.

So, I did not rise to his bait to inveigle me into going or staying with him. He wanted to lure me to the spy's lair. I suspected a booby trap at his house. I had the haunting hunch that he had left Ajaib Singh at his house where he wanted to take me. Alternatively, Ajaib Singh might be slinking about the premises of the railway station. I had also the hunch that he had a ranch in the town somewhere. I found myself completely mystified at cross-roads. I wanted time to collect my wits. What the Giani said left disquieting doubts and an exhausting hesitation in my mind.

I found myself in a tight corner for a detective. There were now many sides to the question. Was I zooming down the road to failure? Should I pull up? If not, which way should I go? Despair gave me many ideas as I had now more imagination than knowledge to answer these questions.

I convassed a number of alternatives. Should I drop my masquerade, identify myself, arrest the Giani and interrogate him about the whereabouts of Ajaib Singh? Would it bring Ajaib Singh any nearer if the Giani were drawn into the legal net? No: Ajaib Singh, and not the Giani, was the man for me. I was stumping hard to catch him. The mesh appeared to be far too wide to catch him, catching the Giani. In case the Giani were arrested strictly secretly, Ajaib Singh, who might be anxiously waiting for him outside the premises of the railway station or at his house, was more than likely to suspect foul-play on his failure to return home and run away. The Giani's arrest won't force him back. He would care two straws for him when his own life was at stake. Then why kiss the maid and miss the mistress? Why extend the range and miss the target. Why catch the shadow and lose the substance? Why squander the rare chance on a man who was at best a harbourer? I, therefore, decided to let the Giani go.

The Giani and I were alone together for some twenty minutes, feeling each other out. I made abortive efforts to coax this freshly

mute oracle into revealing some speedy solution of the intractable dilemma. He took time answering. He spoke only intermitantly and reluctantly, with quite a few embarrassing pauses. Though he looked easy meat for me I was careful not to over-play, rush or strain the situation. We broke after an utterly insipid talk.

I : Well, Giani Sahib, to see you again. I request you in parting not to tell a soul that I have been to you. I wouldn't like it getting around. Its fall-out would risk our mission.

Giani : I'll keep it hermetically to myself.

I got gloomy. The Giani left me cold. He paced across the platform with the swagger of a tall soldier. I was as sorry as I could be to see him go. However, one thing extremely significant emerged from our secret meeting. He seemed to have been satisfied with my impeccable credentials as a deshbhagat. He left with the impression that I was a perfect stranger, a devoted deshbhagat, trying to catch at every straw.

The policemen were just about the people around. They filed past us many a time, winking one to the other across the darkness. Though they kept a safe ten yards away, it appeared they were straining their ears to catch our talk. After the Giani had cleared the platform, I told them to break off.

I was now inclined to feel that, if nothing more, I should do one thing on the spur of the moment and that was that I should ensure that Ajaib Singh was not lurking around. For this, it was necessary to shadow the Giani all the way home to see whether he went all alone. How to do it? I had nobody with me to put a shadow on him or a stakeout on his house. For obvious reasons, I could not and would not ask the local Police to do it for me. I could not take them into confidence about the identity of the Giani without risking the exposure of my own identity to the Giani and the mission itself to everybody. I decided to do it myself, though this again involved the possibility of risking my identity if I ventured out by night or went messing around by day simply to ascertain that Ajaib Singh just was not lounging around.

I changed my mask and hastened after the Giani. I soon caught up within respectable distance behind him. We went by ourselves separately. I kept the tail all his way home, looking around him and myself. I could see far in the dark. I was a fast pedestrian but I fell further behind as we neared his house. The dog came out wagging his tail to receive his master and announced his welcome with a friendly grunt. I fell still further back to keep out of his barking distance and avoid his bite and his master's

attention. I hung about the premises for a couple of minutes and strained my eyes and ears to see anything unusual or overhear some shuffling inside. Nothing of interest could be visible or audible from where I was. No lights, not even a feeble flicker, were put on, nor any talk or turmoil heard on or after the Giani's arrival. It seemed dead of night without light and life in the house. Silence.

I now raved to myself "what to do with the Giani next?" It is not unoften that a criminal returns to the scene of the offence or his place of hiding. This being so, should I keep tabs on the Giani, his house and his school? Should his house be surveilled and his neighbourhood prowled round the clock? No. Firstly, I could not put constant tails on him or case his house by myself unless there were other officers to take turns. Any surveillance without sufficient staff to take shifts would be a futile fiddling unless it was done with the unblinking intentness of a tomcat at a mousehole. Secondly, it would be unsafe to entrust the job to unskilled hands who had not been tried or tested for ability or reliability. Too many ambitious cooks would spoil the broth already hanging fire far too long. Thirdly, any slip in surveillance would mean losing Ajaib Singh for good.

Still another course was open to me. Should the Gianis' house be raided in search for Ajaib Singh? This could be done, if at all, at any time immediately after the Giani's return home that night. But the possibility of Ajaib Singh not being in the house or his escape to some unknown place flickered across my mind. Any raid without complete certainty about Ajaib Singh's presence in the house was sure to damage the line of my investigation beyond repair. I was stalking for Ajaib Singh and if anything went wrong he would not venture from his shelter. He had already defied all attempts at his arrest without the least silver lining in the many-month long dark clouds. In the circumstances, the greatest care had to be exercised. The house was not raided. By and large, it was all one and as broad as it was long whether I arrested the Giani or searched or surveilled his house.

I took a long lonely walk back. It is said that angels tread lonely roads. It was doubtless a lonely road but treaded by a dejected angler. Enroute lay a small sleepy town, dreary and deserted under the anemic silvery glow of the moon, musky shadows and black blotches.

I was dead tired. Even a small suit-case seemed heavy. I had none to take turns carrying. And yet I returned to the railway station quicker than it had taken me to shadow the Giani. The agony of failure which had overwhelmed the anguish of fatigue seemed to have quickened my pace and mind inordinately. As

before, I cast backward glances to cover my rear. Naturally enough, all the walking time was spent thinking and planning just how to set about the task *de novo*.

I had a small appetite. I was more angry than hungry. Heat and fatigue had eaten up all hunger. However, I had had a few snatches of a hasty supper from a repugnant shop that stayed open late. The food was awfully wretched, without relish and soon done.

This was the time to assess the day's work and its worth. I had a long and tiring day, busy without getting a bee in my bonnet. Now an uneasy night was descending. Despair and darkness came together. A day-dream became a nightmare of dark despair. The adventure seemed doomed from the start, running, as it did, into teething troubles. I was now in the doldrums, thwarted at the very thresh-hold of success. I was poised for attack when the Giani's somersault threw me off balance. What had looked an imminent shot in the arm deteriorated into a random shot in the dark. All hope ran out in no time. I was within a streak of success when the chance went by me. It was the nearest miss. I was again in deep waters. I was within an ace when I found that I was out of my depth. The last rung of the ladder pipped me when I had my catch just on the hook only to let him get off. I had come within a whisker of nailing him cold when the pace slowed down to a calkwalk. I found myself completely strayed from the highway back to the puzzling cross-roads, making it a pretty heavy and rocky going on an extremely arduous log rolling. What had seconds before seemed to be immediately visible became indefinitely invisible. Expectancy and disappointment came too close to be detachable or discernible, one from the other. The adventure had now something of the mirage, receding into infinity, a near certainty into a distant uncertainty. The good start ended badly. Luck, which had taken long to come, did not last long. The flush of optimism faded, snuffing out the short-lived glimmer of hope. What a slippery luck it was. The shot exploded short of the target. Even the little dope of hope diminished and dropped to a new low. It seemed desperately difficult to retrieve the lost ropes and get back to the bearing.

Disappointment damps dash and drive. I was alone with my utter worry. The spectre of a sudden failure made me feel lonelier than I was. A sense of foreboding gripped me. I was struck by a subjective disturbance. I felt beyond my depth. Why this disappointing detour of destiny, a bitter blow at a time when I, with all my heart, had been looking forward to the excitement of a speedy success? The black pall of galling grief weighed heavily on me, getting me down. I now realised that I could no longer pretend that the job was easier than it was, that I had undertaken to skate

on thin ice in hot weather and that I had set myself a hard task of catching a Tartar. It was doubtless an uphill task and not all beer and skittles. It appeared as if I had so far been ploughing the sands.

The case got worse. It looked as if Ajaib Singh had still had some grace period. There was no knowing how long the grace period would be. Was luck out? Yes, it was. There was no telling how long it would take to show the green light. One could only hope it would not be too long, though suddenly to be so cruelly and bitterly disappointed was more than one could bear even for a split second. Luck and good time seemed to have run out quicker than quick sands.

I was caught in a pincers. Now my problems were two-fold; time and uncertainty. My programme to catch Ajaib Singh and also catch up with the clock slipped behind the time-table and the target. I got into desperate straits. Things did not go my way. The plan did not work. A stimulating challenge deteriorated into a hazardous upstream swim. The odds were too great. But I could blame nobody. I had taken a calculated real risk myself, a harrowing and poignant ordeal, a momentous and staggering undertaking of my own choice. The passion to peer down into murky depths of mysteries was my own. I never realised that everything would go grievously wrong. The situation changed ominously. The nebulous adventure collapsed and slumped into a misadventure, a drama into a melodrama. The future seemed very grim and grey. Hopes of an early or easy success plummeted. An interminable delay seemed to have come to stay. What really got me was that it was no longer a dream but an illusion.

Absolutely broken in body and spirit, I looked for a night's lodging in some obscure place. I found one, secure and secluded, in a remote corner of the Police Post, a marvellously untidy place, grubby and grimy to the last degree. I was all in, drooping beyond endurance and feeling exhausted from doing nothing. I was down and out badly. My nerves were giving out. I developed a soaring headache and went to bed on an almost empty stomach.

I had the blight of a bad sleeper. I could not sleep a wink for hours on end. I was weak and weary with my eyes wakeful beyond control. I was so much at sixes and sevens that I could not dismiss the case from my mental recoil and uneasiness. I sat up in torment most of the night, turning the situation over in my mind, brooding and browsing in isolation, undecided what to do next. Lying uneasily in the bed with my head pillowed on my suit-case, I convassed my prospects in the game. It was time to take another thought and stock of the situation to retrieve it and ponder over a reappraisal and a possible change for a new pose to get another

start. I found myself tangled up and jockeyed into a stalemate. A welter of tangled association of assorted ideas crowded my mind. I was on tenterhooks which stayed with me overnight.

Short of a miracle, success became debatable and prospects uncompromising. I wrung my hands in black despair, going over the floaters and bloomer's I might have made in drawing a duck. I looked at the elusive trophy with a vain longing. Now the prospects seemed more painful than pleasurable. The situation was extremely intriguing in its possibilities. The whole plan needed a thorough introspection, a quick and correct interplay of thought and action. All this set off a flurry of speculation. I cudgelled my imagination and argued to myself the causes and cures of the flop.

Numerous questions impinged on my mind. Was the fiasco my fault? Was it because I was naively optimistic or was I overly sanguine and expected too much too soon? Had I gone too far, too fast? Was the advance harried by tactical failures? Had I made a rickety trap? Had I made a hash, mistimed the arrangement and run ahead of the adventure? Had I overshot the mark or jumped before I came to the still? Had I made a gross under-estimate due to my belief in an easy push-over? Had I put my wrong foot in it? Was it due to any visible fault or the invisible fate? Was I so near the forest that I couldn't see the trees? Was I indulging in a pleasant self-deception of a half-awake child fiddling with a fake clue, chasing a fancy, a will-o-the-wisp, a downright desultory wandering? Had I hit the jack-pot with a slippery bottom? If so, how to brick up the freshy broken bottom? Why this sudden shift in the situation at a time when the adventure appeared to have run its full course and reached the highest watermark of a breakthrough in a gruelling game? Why a blazing trail dwindled into a tricky trickle and a shaky twinkle? Why this brazen-faced denial of previous promises? Why this cavalier refusal to help in future? Why a talkative teacher, who had bluffed too much earlier in the day, had turned taciturn so soon? Why this midstream betrayal? Why an almost open case again became a shut-case at a stage when I had stumbled upon a clue promising to crack it? Why my initial optimism of an easy success now came home to roost? Why the vision of an early success came a cropper? Why this unseemly dark reverse of the medal? Why the silver lining failed to quickly line up with my prediction?

There was no pat answer to these questions. No easy explanation was forthcoming. I was in a state, feeling totally lost and lonesome, standing at a dead-end street, floundering hopelessly out of my depths, walking right out of the case. The light that shines in darkness shines brightest. But there was no such light or lining

to beat the new black barrier, or guide the benighted adventurer. A grim realization of disillusion and disappointment set in. It was not easy to wring hope from despair or find a way round the impasse. This was a shoddy finishing to the one-day drama which completely grounded to a halt before it could just take off.

All this foreboded ominus portents, making me feel that I had so far been counting unhatched chickens in an unwon enterprise. It was still too soon to forestall its next turns and twists. Experience and intelligence were on test. Instinct and reason were under challenge. All the five senses came to a cross-road. Only a classic prophecy and mysterious foreknowledge could hazard a bold guess. The spy seemed to have gone far afield and the task become long and laborious. The job required a man of mettle and a touch of Robert Bruce in the pursuer to do it and a sustained and sticky follow-up and not just a flash in the pan. The brusque end to the day's drama heightened uncertainties about Ajaib Singh's arrest. I was convinced that the adventure was not going to be just plain lucky nor was he going to be a lame duck taken that easily. He knew more than anybody else that his capture meant his death.

But it was no time to boggle at the difficulties. Basic to the situation was the Giani's about-face which had clinched it all for me. It was not possible to make a final reading on his attitude. He did not hold out even the faintest hope. Nothing seemed to spark a fresh flash. The mystery continued to proliferate.

Man is created of haste. But the fast first had been a total flop. Any more break-neck speed might again throw it all over-board. One must never be precipitate in a matter as this. "When in doubt, do nothing; try to discover what is best to do". It should be "slow and sure". I should bide my time, soft-pedal and steer a patient course, play it cool and make a sedate approach as any more quick hit out might mean another get out. I must lie low and go slow. I must inch forward cautiously. Speed must give way to the situation. I must move with care, for one word, one awkward gesture, would frustrate the whole plan. I must drastically alter my technique. This was an excellent clue which won't come abegging every day.

Subseuquent events showed that I was right to wait till fog had cleared. No adventure is all fair weather or a short-run decision. No adventure brooks an unseemly haste. The case had taken on a new urgency, no doubt; but the greater the haste, the less the speed. If one runs fast, one can't run far. Even haste and hurry require time. Haste had already brought me bad taste. Shortcuts are sometimes the longest in the long run. The longest journey begins with a single step. It ends with a single step. The

step, first or last, should be taken carefully. I had no time to commit mistakes. I should not commit blunders in an ambition to do wonders. Prudence advised circumspection. But how long should I lie low and go slow? I decided delay; hasten it slowly, go at a tempered pace and hold my hand, as it seemed at the moment little more than a vaulting ambition. I must steer between caution and ambition. Unless the pros and cons of the latest position were thoroughly weighed, the question regarding any further step seemed somewhat fuzzy. I was all the time in an awful pensive mood. Nothing could make me sleep in such a pickle.

The night deepened. The moon reached her noon. The lateness of the hour added to the dreadful disappointment. All attempts made to ease off a little proved abortive. Unable to sleep a wink, I sat in silence amid the darkness. It was only the cool of the late night that doused me. I sank into a restless sleep, snatched some catnaps for ten minutes about three times. Even so, I was all the time three-quarters awake, wide-awake for the better part of the night. Again I tried to sleep and again I could not. Fleas, bugs and mosquitoes nipped me the whole night and fought off sleep. It was not comfortable to sleep under a mosquito-net either. I had a better stretch with a quiet snooze, now on a wooden bench and now a little doze on a chair. This was how I slept off a bit of my weariness. Though each time I awakened out of an uneasy sleep, I was much the better for my few minutes rest. On the whole, the night was all blight from worms and worries, a long and infinitely lonely unending night, wearing as it did slowly on. The pensive mood stayed with me throughout. There was nothing to entertain my unexpected long leisure, nothing to beguile away the interminable night. It would be hard to imagine a more dismal night. I had never had such a workless and yet restless night, the longest in my memory. It had gone far into the dawn and I was still lying awake, yawning.

It again started raining. An immaculate moonlit night turned into a dismal darkness. The temperature began to drop. By midnight it came down to 103. And yet it was a sticky and stifling night. Lack of sleep had sagged my muscles immensely.

The day dawned. The sky cleared. I rose to a most miserable and melancholy morning, oppressed by a sense of despondency and depression, utterly drawn from the dreadful tedium of the empty night. I soon got out of bed on the wrong side. The hangover of the new situation still swamped my thinking and numbed my imagination, making me unsteady, much as any one would be fighting his way out of dark portents after a similar experience. An uncanny and snap judgment was badly overdue. But I was in a bitter quandary, tied up in staggering

complexities and vexed with myself. The problem was getting mental with physical weariness. I assembled my facts and ideas. I tensed, meditating scheme after scheme. But a night-long hectic cogitation on the prospects of the mission had led me nowhere. Any amount of scratching of the skull and long and hard and fast thinking failed to extricate me from the quagmire. Ideas flew past, one into another, but then disintegrated and ran out soon. The problem was how to avoid complexity of ideas and ambiguity of action. I was in an awful bleak mood, unable to bring myself to decide where I should re-start and where stop. A single false step could be fatal. What could be the next best? How to shape my future career. It was as difficult to decide what not to do as what to do. Every move was blighted by diffidence. I turned over various angles, soliloquizing "what are the odds if I do this or do that". For all the precautions taken by me meticulously previously, the adventure had gone frightfully awry, running into an apparently irrevocable reverse.

The glow and glare of the morning sun was sizzling enough to remind one of the imminent hot day. Unshaven and tousled, I took a snatchy breakfast from a shanty snack bar on a siding of the railway premises and relapsed into a state of indecision. As before, every time I decided only to undecide again in the same breath. The crux of the inexorable problem now was how to salvage the bad situation, how to hurdle the new barrier and how to make the intractable Giani tick and manoeuvre him out of his elaborate and yet transparent pretence and get it off the hook smoothly and speedily. He had gone too far with the lie. How to get him back on the track, tackle him and stoke the latent cinders on him? How to talk him out of his new pose and bring him into fruitful dialogue? How to rekindle him, pry the truth and winkle Ajaib Singh out of him? Was his story a fake? Was he the villain of the piece? Had he, under his mellowed exterior, an ulterior interior ? It was possible but unlikely. Being a scholar of theology, as a Giani is, he did not really look the part. Though he was bright enough to be a liar, he was not. He seemed too good to be a dissembler, too religious to be a calculating plotter, too honest to be a cunning schemer and too straight to be a small artificer. But what had made him a coy? Why had he not responded the way he had promised? Why had he been non-committal and non-communicative with plenty painful pauses? Why had he become secretive and equivocal after warming up?

Imagination ran riot but failed to fill the blanks. No explanation was available for his rapid about-face, his sterile attitude and his calculated reticence. It was a dismaying experience in bleak and hostile surroundings. The future was hazy and

hazardous. It was long before I got my wits again. I could not help stock-taking, comparing and drawing my own conclusions time and again. I was on edge throughout, mentally discussing how to counter the situation and how best to make the next move and plan fresh tactics in advance.

How long should I hold off? How long should I stand irresolute? Wasn't the intervening night enough to pause and ponder? I couldn't fumble with the ball and endure the suspense indefinitely. I felt that I should get down to the bedrock and put the issue beyond doubt.

Therefore, I was soon again in the grip of my anxiety to think hard and act fast to short-circuit the tortuous affair and get at Ajaib Singh quickly. I fell into a frenzied impatience. The Giani was a very tempting target. I decided to frisk him in a manner that nobody in Taran Taaran knew of it. I felt that Ajaib Singh, if he had been with the Giani the previous night, must have left him and returned to his place of hiding and that, therefore, the Giani's secret arrest and speedy interrogation might prove fruitful. The idea was to break him with speed and secrecy. I, therefore, detailed the same Head Constable and his staff to sit in plain clothes outside the main gate of the railway station, play cards and wait for me. I told them that I was going to fetch a man who was to be arrested and hustled to their Police Post strictly secretly. This was at about 11 a.m.

I went to the Giani's School which was within a ten-minute walking distance from the railway station. I sent word to him. He came and met me on the road outside.

I: I apologise for all this bother. I have a feeling of despair. I have lost all hope of meeting Ajaib Singh. I have an important message for him. Would you kindly take the message and convey it to him, should he ever meet you again?

Giani: (Readily) Come along. Let us go inside the school and have a chat.

I: You will kindly excuse my inability to go inside the school for obvious reasons. It would be nice of you, indeed, to accompany me to the railway station and take the message. I want to catch the first available train for some place immediately after I give you the message.

Giani: I am busy today; come another day.

I: You better cancel lessons; alternatively, leave the school after classes.

Giani: I can come only after the Headmaster orders the school closed. It would be as well if you accompany me to the school. I assure you that there would be just the two of us.

I: You are perfectly right and yet it would be wrong for me to go off the track.

Giani: The school is in session. I can't leave it. I can't scamp my duty. I don't want to disturb the lessons.

I: Please get leave from the Headmaster for the rest of the day.

Giani: I can't. We have full time-tables and intensive classes. The school is closing for the summer vacation shortly and we are busy giving home-task to the students. I have to get through prodigious amount of work. Can't you see me at my place another time or when the school is in recess over the week-end?

I: No, I can't wait. National imperatives supervene all other considerations. Can you be at the railway station after the school closes for the day?

Giani: The closing bell goes at 1 o'clock. I will see you at the station at about 1-30 p.m.

I: Thank you, I shall wait for you.

I hastened back to the railway station and started waiting for the Giani from noon. Time crept by. An hour passed. Two hours. Three hours. The wait ran overtime. Each moment seemed an age. The Giani did not show up even long after the school had finished. The hour grew late. It was already past the middle of the afternoon. It proved a tedious and futile wait. I waited for him all the afternoon. The wait seemed an eternity. The agony of waiting was unbearable. His behaviour baffled me. The man who had been so correct to the minute to arrive at the railway station the previous evening that one could set one's watch by him was now five hours over schedule. The trouble with this vacant waiting, doing nothing, was that I could never take any time off. But then I could not sit on my idle hands, waiting indefinitely for him. Like the goal, he too became elusive. The device to decoy him into leaving the school and walking into my net failed. This again stirred intense speculation. My imagination reeled and staggered. I stood undecided. The suspense was getting me, causing a crucifying anxiety and a hard dilemma. It seemed impossible to conceive a way out of an apparently inextricable situation. I was in sight of success when this shilly-shallying began. I was now certain that my plan had gone askew and that there seemed not one chance in a hundred of Ajaib Singh moving out of his shell. I felt that there was some

villainy behind all this and that the Giani had given me a double-cross with his glamorous talk and charming lies.

This was a drama of delays, the second bleak day running. The interim result belied my high hopes. The enterprise ran into an appalling weather which raised dust and reduced visibility. What had promised a bright success only moments before now seemed a brilliant failure. The blaze cooled off. The light flickered and faded out too soon. The mission went the very worst. I was again far away from nowhere. It ended where it had begun. My most ingenious initiative ran down. How to unsettle the uneasy situation? How to tie-up too many odd ends in a tangled skein of factors? There was no light or lead, nothing to make the odds even. A rethinking of approach was necessary. I was again brimming with ideas, thinking long and hard, sinking into a hopeless stupor. I drew blank with the Giani in the first round.

I waited until well into the late evening when in the deepening gloom of dusk I decided to be guided by developments. I never did things by halves but in view of the latest position it seemed advisable to let the matter rest for the moment as I would be only burning day-light by staying on the job indefinitely. How far could I go and how long could I continue? Time was my pressing problem and I was rigged for speed. My work in the Fort had lapsed. I had already spent a very active but crummy two days in the town in a futile pursuit of a shadow. I felt that I had been trying to play a broken record and that it would be no use taking up full time residence in the town. I left for Lahore grudgingly. I was now in retreat in a state of agonising uncertainty without anything to carry home beyond smudges under the eyes resulting from worry and wakefulness.

I drove into Lahore and gave the D. I. G. and the S. P. (Security) a quick and excited resume of what had transpired between me and the Giani. They were deeply interested to hear the dramatic story. I told them that I had got my case but not the man of the case, that the spy appeared to be within sight but not within grasp and that though things were still at the talking stage, I was convinced that I was on the hot trail, pressing the right button and that I was not chasing a rainbow or a mirage but following a line that was as straight as a ramrod. How long was the line and when would a stringing of its loose ends give me an out was still beyond the hazy horizon. They tended to the feeling that the Giani was obviously the harbourer but were doubtful about the final success now that he, getting wise, was trying to hedge on his commitment. Opinion differed about the change in the Giani's attitude. Some said it was due to Ajaib Singh refusing to see Ismail for lack of his interest in the mission

or for fear of detection. Others said that Ajaib Singh possiblv suspected my identity as Ismail.

D. I. G.: Sure, he didn't suspect your identity?

I: I couldn't be positive, one way or the other: he suspected my identity or there might be nothing to it.

D. I. G.: Are you sure you would draw him out?

I: Unless I am greatly mistaken, I would. I am reasonably certain that I am about half the way up.

D. I. G.: It is clear you are off to a good start, hard upon your target. Make a good job of it.

I: The adventure has a tough going but it is going.

D. I. G.: Yes, it would be going if it goes your way.

I: Given time, it would.

(Counter-espionage is a timeless job. It is not a game of hurried trips. Adventures don't follow timetables. One can't always pick up plumps in one jump).

These opinions and interpretations did not deflect me from my resolve that, come what might, I must se: it through.

I now tried another tack. I sent a phoney wire followed by a wheedling letter closely written in Urdu on a grubby scrap of paper by Ismail to Diljit Singh (Ajaib Singh) c/o Giani Sewa Singh, Teacher, Khalsa High School, Taran Taaran, inviting him to meet him at Lahore.

> "I have been to Gurdwara Marhana Sahib and Giani Sewa Singh in an attempt to see you. The Giani who, like you, is a paragon of virtues, made abortive attempts to trace you and arrange my meeting with you.
>
> Where in the world are you ? I want badly to meet you. I have had something very urgent up my sleeves to discuss and decide with you. I am going to Sialkot and will return to Lahore in a few days' time. If you want to meet me, I will wait for you at 5 p.m. daily on the 26th and 27th of July in front of the Museum at Lahore. I am greatly hoping that you will make it a point to meet me urgently. The only way you will hurt me is not to show up. More when we meet."

(The letter was so brief that the envelope seemed without an enclosure. It was designed to serve as a "covering letter" and lull suspicion about my identity, if any. The intention was (*a*) to convince Ajaib Singh and, for that matter, the Giani, that it was Ismail and no impersonator, who had met the Giani

and (*b*) to use Ismail as a decoy, lure Ajaib Singh to Lahore and arrest him).

We took Ismail at the appointed time out of the cell and put him in front of the Museum under an extremely unobstrusive watch of four gunmen in plain clothes at a respectable distance under my supervision. Ismail co-operated and behaved as directed. We did this on both the dates mentioned in Ismail's letter to Ajaib Singh. We had no luck. The strategy did not work. Ajaib Singh did not take the bait like I did not the Giani's. He did not come. He seemed to have completely vanished. It was all dark and deep despair, high suspense, a fruitless and fateful adventure. Success seemed an outside chance. This was the end of the new road, in fact an endless road which went nowhere. I was like a person who had slipped from the milky way to the unmarked paths of the sky.

We will presently see how the spy and I had slipped through each other's fingers and the fingers of death at the Taran Taaran Railway Station. But this belated discovery made my disappointment all the more poignant and painful. The only saving clause way my providential escape from sure death. It was only by the great good fortune that the fugitive failed to find out his head-hunter.

V—BRINKMANSHIP WITH THE HARBOURER

The net result of the adventure had so far been tragically negative. We have it from science that two negatives make one positive. But though the case had by now multiple negatives, no two of them were scientific enough to make even a single positive. This was not the space-age and yet I was crying for the moon and, in spite of its discouraging distance, trying to run it to earth and square its circle.

Never before had I drawn so much inspiration as now from Stevenson : "Failure is the high road to success". It was now with me a case of *Faith* v. *Failure*. The failure failed to defeat my firm faith in the ultimate success. I did not find it easy to be any wiser after the first failure and leave it at that. I had good reasons for fooling myself in what had first looked a foolhardy dash into the unknown. It is not unoften that a lean time at the outest ultimately carries success in failure. The darkest hour is before dawn. When it is dark enough, one can see the stars. There is always a silver lining to every sable cloud. The trips had widened my horizon, set my jaw and the tempo of my adventure and shown me a sparkle of a lining to lift the thining cloud. I had come a good distance and, though still in rocky water, it seemed shallow enough to enable me to feel the ground and wade ashore. I was happy to have discovered, beside the spy's roots, his harbourer in the Giani, for he was an anonymous-looking man.

I felt certain that I would get the spy somewhere, somehow and some day but uncertain when and where it would be. At any rate, I refused to admit defeat or brook the idea of the mission petering out in the very hour of its final fruition. Experience had taught me to expect the worst of every situation and every person. I was unbent in my resolve and still cherished an unremitting hope at the blackest moment of my disappointment. I had a fierce determination to go all lengths to succeed. I forestalled the fate of the enterprise by striking a balance between the probables and the improbables and fancied my chances very strongly. I hailed every bit of what had happened

as a great signal of my success in the not-too-distant future. Whatever the number of negatives, I was positive that my performance was going great and that, though prediction is a risky pursuit, the most tantalising aspect of the latest developments was that, if stars were not that bad, the spy would be arrested sooner than expected. I was sanguine that this was only a temporary upset, that it did not exhaust the matter, that things would look up and sort themselves out before long and that consequent success was only a turn way. Notwithstanding the heavy interim odds, I was supremely confident that in the final analysis I would be able to get the Giani off the hook and close my net on Ajaib Singh so much as to give no chance to any of them to flee the coop. My dream did not die with the defection of the Giani. The outlook, though dim, was not dismal except that it required fresh imagination and a quick footwork. I should think hard but act fast. The new situation required a suppleness of mind, a stout heart and a cool head. I might bend but never break. I should streamline my approach, mend it but never end it. I was inclined to feel from a collation of all relevant factors that the Giani was honest, mindful of his promise to the catechist but helpless. May-be he was not so unwilling as unable to help or, after all, we had known each other a bare five or six hours. I reminisced my first round with the Giani as a good rustler, stirring the spy from his hideout and providing a good goad and grist to my ambition.

But all this seemed a wishful day dream. I was in great demand at the Fort. Immense interrogation work necessitated extra hours to clear up the backlog. Tremendous rush of case work at the headquarters left little hope of my going out after the clue any more. The strain of work was beyond me. The D. I. G. and the S. P. (Security) too were not likely to agree to my consigning piles of files to the lumber-room and running after a receding mirage.

But I was loathe to flinch and leave it at that after I had put my hand to the plough. I had found a niche and was keen to keep to the trails, get back into the game and see through the plan I had so meticulously nurtured. It was the chance of a lifetime for any enterprising policeman. I had gone too far to turn back. I must go where the ball was. Whatever the hazards, I must take the gamble. Succeed I must in God's good time. My pledge was inviolable. I was resolved to do it for every reason in the world. I did not want to quit investigating the spy and chuck off my self-imposed duty. I had by now both a personal and a professional interest in the case. I had before me the greatest challenge of my career. I was convinced that the spy was in hiding through the Giani and that if the

Giani could be arrested, interrogated and broken quietly, success would be round the corner. Some of the officers shared my confidence. The line between success and failure had already become very thin. But direct action involved a grave risk. If the spy were to get even an inkling of the Giani's arrest, he would leave all the places of his hiding known to the Giani and run away for good. Therefore, before taking the last step as a Police Officer I decided to see the Giani again in my previous role as Ismail and try to draw him out further.

Barren days, then weeks, passed. Nothing happened. It seemed almost impossible to take time off my frightful preoccupation. But I was getting restive to return to my ranch. I requested the S. P. (Security) to allow me another try for a couple of days. As before, he hesitated saying "again you want to go yourself as if you haven't got enough to worry about the relentless schedule at the Fort, working up to the limits of your capacity without any intermissions". However, I persisted in the course I had set myself. I had found the fugitive's trail and was keen to get on his heels. He agreed.

I left the Fort on a Sunday at the first streaks of dawn, 4 o'clock, to be exact. No taxi-driver was willing to take a fare to a distant place out of Lahore in the small hours. One agreed on a small raise in the usual rates. I hauled a brief kit in the taxi. The driver pulled the meter and proceeded.

I relieved the taxi at Taran Taaran and walked to the Giani's house. It was about noon. It was not advisable to walk in on the off chance that the spy was not in. Therefore, I did a brief sniffing to ascertain the whos' who of the inmates. The Giani alone was at home. He was said to have long finished his miscellanea for rest on a leisurely Sunday. I announced my arrival, asking : anybody home ? The dog was on the prowl but behaved as though acknowledging a nodding acquaintance with me. A servant came out. I asked him for the Giani. The Giani was in the middle of his lunch. He came out grinning. He saw me just about the time I saw him. We walked over to each other and sat on the verandah. I apologised for the bother at an odd time of the holiday. I tried to pick up the trail where I had left and appealed to his sense of patriotism, imploring him to help meet Ajaib Singh. I hoped nothing had been lost by the hiatus. But as before, I had to tackle him *de novo* and walk a very narrow line. We entered the conversation.

Giani : (burst with hell fury) Oh, you again ?

I : Giani Sahib, you have had a consuming passion for

deshbhagats. You are no less a deshbhagat than Ajaib Singh and myself. We have a common mission. We need your logistic support, your goodwill and good temper. You are the man for me. Kindly do help me in meeting our deshbhagat, Ajaib Singh. God bless you.

(For all my ingratiating talk, the Giani gave me a reproachful look, as if he would devour me with his eyes. He was now completely cold and cynical, full of contemptuous pride, no longer receptive or facile to my overtures and entreaties. His eyes were now different. He was entirely disoriented and absolutely priggish. The first flush and lavish warmth of welcome for a deshbhagat, nay, even the professional courtesy usual with a teacher, was gone. I never expected that a man with a good eye would soon exhibit a bad tongue. He was every scrap sadly different from what I had seen of him last at the railway station. With all my flattery and sophistry he seemed to have been piqued by my gruelling visits. His face radiated fire. He flashed me bellicose glances. The cold glare of his eyes was enough to make one sweat. I noticed a sudden change in his blood pressure soaring to lethal levels. His bleary and blood-shot eyes were emitting blazing anger. He was so peevish and red in the face that he answered my greetings with a nod. The saga began when he, with his hands on his hips, eyed me sullenly and aggressively, flew into a vicious temper, snorted and leered at me in a scornful derision, scowling and erupting into an explosion. He pulled his face and grated) :

Giani : (said stridently :)

Why have you barged in ? What is all this pother about ?

I : Oh, that's it ! And it's enough.

Giani : What have you to do with me ?

I : Everything !

Giani : What do you mean by coming to me time and again ? I have told you, once for all, that I do not know where Ajaib Singh is. I am weary and wary of diabolical deshbhagats with a foreign stamp. I see your kind daily. You or any number of your brand with incredible credentials can't stir even a ripple in the sea or a ruffle in the air of the liberation movement. Grafters, like you, who have no local roots and no authority except their own, will never feel the ground, much less make any headway in the grim and grievous battle of emancipation. Our own

> deshbhagats are already in the saddle, working day and night in collaboration with the political leaders supported by the masses.

I'm sick at your presence. You have scrambled my sleep and are now getting on my nerves. You better call the bluff, go away while the going is good. If you 'll be so kind as to leave my place forthwith, never repeat the uninvited visit, stamp into my house or set your foot here again. I shall be grateful. And I hope I shall not have the pleasure of another visit from you. You should leave me in peace, coldly to myself, never come or write to me again unless you are anxious to meet your nemesis at my house. Don't you call again and venture to impose on me and my time so outrageously. I don't entertain importune visitors. I don't put up with a domineering guest far too long and I wish to see the last of you. Ajaib Singh or no Ajaib Singh, I forbid you my house for good. Your telegram and letter addressed to Ajaib Singh care of me are lying with me undelivered. Pester me if you must but never on account of Ajaib Singh. Meanwhile farewell.

This was how the Giani indignantly denied all knowledge of Ajaib Singh. He was in an awful stew and flew at me in a blazing fit of spleen. He was in a temper, a tall man with a low boiling point. He kept edging up to me with words full of menace and a voice dripping bitterness. He made all the furore with intense fulmination, fuming and fretting, absolutely deaf to reason. He huffed and puffed and wagged his finger at me to emphasise his anger. It was quite a nightmare and stunning surprise to see the meally-mouthed Giani blasting like a furnace, belching and spitting fire like a dragon, giving hoots of laughter in scorn. He was shooting blood out of his eyes. He said all this to send me away on my way.

Why was he speaking out of line after giving me a run-round? It was difficult to read him. Had he had any real or reasonable doubts about my identity ? Why was this agreeable figure emitting disagreeable stench ? The extraordinary thing about the situation was that it happened at all. So far, I had depended heavily on him for my meeting with the spy. But he was now trying to unsay what he had earlier said without realizing that this might tie him in knots.

Two courses were open to me ; appease him or oppose him ; hold back and go easy on his fighting talk or risk his offence and let myself go and respond in kind.

"Beware of long arguments and long beards" Says George Santanyana.

The warning "Beware of long arguments" is understandable generally and in the case of a village school master particularly. But why "beware of long beards"? Why dread beards, the symbol of piety and sobriety? A teacher lives by his tongue and a Giani by his beard. The man confronting me was both a teacher and a long-bearded Giani. I must strike a balance between his tongue and his beard.

Therefore, to start with, I viewed his threats with equanimity. I kept my head for long and reasoned and remonstrated, vainly hoping to pacify the irate Giani. He stayed stern and the situation could not be more delicate and dangerous. It looked as if my previous interviews with him had been nothing more than an agreeable waste of time.

The other alternative seemed imperative. I decided to react trenchantly, give a Roland for an Oliver, switch my tactics from diplomacy to a ding-dong sabre-rattling, put a bold face on the matter and back-peddal bitterly. I put an act as a deshbhagat, succumbed to his provocations as if his sudden aberrations had aroused my stubborn steak and exploded my wrath. I gave out that his words had caused me piercing and that it was his attitude that had made me to grow warm under the collar, in spite of the fact that I had struggled to restrain my anger but here was something which was hard to swallow. The argument took heat and I was really so excited that I forgot to be afraid. It was the tone more than the text of his talk that was bitter and biting. I was sure that his anger was an afterthought bluff and that it was time to go for him. I felt that what was needed was tough and ingenious talk.

An unseemly wrangle ensued. We made tart rejoinders to each other. Words flared and teeth bared between us. Patience snapped. Tempers rose. The tussle grew from a polemic into a clash. I made the Dickens of a row, became righteously indignant, abandoned the textbook tactics, howled my rage with brutal clarity and tried brinkmanship, not as a Police Officer but, as a deshbhagat reacting crisply and acidly. A policeman should bear and forbear, speak softly and carry a big stick. I acted a dejected deshbhagat, held my forehead puckered into a furious scowl and took the fight to him. I took him to task as if he were now a teacher taught. It was now quite a bizzare scene and a very piquant situation charged with bitterness. I said my piece, pumping every shot right through the bull's eye. What I said to him had no officiousness about it. I gave him an angry stare, contorted my face into a lethal look and took a swift swipe at him with an inexorably outraged indignation :—

I : Don't be vehement, good Giani. Why this senile farrago? Why ask hostile questions, get sore and roar? Why

play God with a guest? I have kept my head too long. I have got to the limit of my endurance and exhausted all the art of pleasing you. You have put me on my metal. Yours is a most stifling and dumpling talk. Such talk won't tick. I would be standing too much if I pocketed it meekly. There is no arguing with a teacher. This is not the occasion to expound the philosophy of my mission. But what has changed your spots and turned you a defector overnight? Your initial warmest of welcomes still tingles on my feelings. Why this sudden flare of fulminations? It is galling to find a man of your huge patience lose the previous cool. Is this to be the finish? I had taken you for a friend at court but found you a broken reed. I had accepted your promise in the spirit in which it had been offered, never knowing that you were leading me up the garden. I could not be too careful with an ethical Giani having an imposing name, face and profession. You have adopted dark and devious ways to play me false.

I don't come to you any oftener than I have to. This is not a social call. I have not been swept to you by a tidal wave. I am on a national mission. But for the national cause, neither pride nor modesty would have suffered me to see a man of your cynical asperity. Why murmur and repine now? Gritting of teeth is no answer. Your fake fury will break no bones. I am not accredited to you but to our deshbhagat Ajaib Singh care of you. I came to see you for what you are, an accommodation address for him. You can no longer cover up your tracks by your needlessly long and loud offensive and outrageously biting scowl of anger. The more you'll avoid me, the more I'll bob up.

Are you a Giani (scholar of theology) for mere style? You have done your worst in the wicked hope to hedge your pledge? Only a man without a shred of conscience could do it. I like the genuine sayer of No more than the hypocritical sayer of Yes. I protest the fact that a teacher should have given a slip and exhausted his wiles on a deshbhagat. I simply shiver with disgust at the treachery of a teacher. You have abnegated your teaching role and compromised your honour and profession. A teacher should not drivel froth, be militant in language, coarse and crass and rough to the smooth. I know what is under this label, a glitter of false tinsel, a holy hoax. I had been deluded by your deceptive elegence, taking comfort from your

religious make-up. Your pose of piety stands exposed. Your private life is not of a piece with your career as a Giani. I'll never believe you even if you were a Giani twice over. I'll never trust your word a penny worth. You have got what you have because of your religious pose and pretentious piety. You have a fictitious aura of yourself, a self-seeker masquerading under a fancy name, trading on others difficulties. Teachers, like you, who have ready-made audience in the taught, soil their minds beyond recovery. Whatever your profession and whatever your pontification, you are as worldly a man as I, inside and out. Your misbehaviour is an insult to the teaching tradition and good sense.

Giani Sahib, this is spiritual black-mail. Your sanctimonious mask would be ripped off by us sooner than later. You are good but not that good. You are a deceitful demagogue performing to catch the public eye. Your bad faith in a good cause is clear from in your equivocation, obstruction and repudiation. I never suspected that what was apparent in a Giani was not the real. We are now clear that you do not share our goal and that you are not interested in where we want you to go. A man with your scraggy nature can no longer keep up the pretence of goodwill towards us. We have seen through your window dressing. We are now full of uncomfortable truth about you. You can't stand the exposure. We know all the nuances of your game. You have been graciously treacherous. Don't trifle with your conscience. Don't you feel a prig? Your conscience and commitment should prick. Nothing could be more left-handed compliments to a teacher than this!

Giani : You don't believe me, do you?

I : Not a word. However reassuring your denial, I refuse to believe it.

(The Giani became all the more furious to find that I had the gall to say all this stuff at his house in the presence of his children who listened to our animated talk sharply. He importantly waved them away retorting "We have a secret". Saying this, he gazed in anger into my eyes and burst into a tirade, asked incisive questions and got scathing answers. We soon got into a quarrel. The children stood rigid with terror at some distance without saying a word, the one to the other).

Giani : (He was now talking with his hands. Wagging his finger warningly, he said:)

Is this how you repay me for my help and hospitality? Never has hospitality fallen so flat in no time. It is rank ingratitude to impose on my kindness and take courage from my silence. You cut the hand that feeds you. I did what I could. Nobody could give you the kind of care I did. You have abused my welcome. You are straining my initial willingness to help you. I won't brook any more bluff and bluster from a man out of the blue, a filibuster, a self-styled deshbhagat of some phantom group, operating without any authority from any of the national organisations. Your claim is a game, a pure gimmick. Mushroom deshbhagats, like you, are flooding our streets with annoying regularity, exploiting credulous people, making hell of a life.

You ridicule my being a Giani? Yes, I am very much a Giani. I took up a career in theology. My father reared me as such and I am proud of it. I was born into a deeply religious family and brought up on rigid religious principles. I am a simple man, not a man of theatre, literature or any scholastic pretensions. I have never been a swinger or a reformer. "Giani" is an overworked word, a doubtful compliment these days.

I : Is this help or hindrance? On your own showing, if you were really hospitable, why are you treating me with icy disdain now? What has happened to your erstwhile soli-citude, candour and courtesy? You were at first overanxious and talking out of turn to help me. What has made you dry-as-dust so soon? What has made you to beguile and deflect me from the right road? Why are you dead set against our plans now? Why should I confess obligations when you have done precious little for the country. You are the one who needs the assurance of money, an ambitious and devious capitalist, a British lacky, an imperialist flunkey, an Anglophile peddling their interest with a faceless face. You are tucked up in a sleek and ornate house, nestling in its serenity, having a swell time, living soft and secure, putting private comforts ahead of the national need, mortgaging the future of the country for the present, tasting the sweet stench of affluence, lost head over heels in callous riches, a show-off, proclaiming a spurious devotion to patriotism. Poking caustic fun at poor patriots seems to be your pastime.

You are too full of yourself to listen to reason. It is no time to prate of your pious pedigree or high connections. If you do, as you have, you better lend us your

weight and respect. But in vain have I been begging you with all my soul not to frustrate our fight for freedom or do anything which might dangerously compromise the future of our country. It is time to build a nation out of a crowd and free ourselves from the hangover of the country's old slavery, the dead past, devoid of all sense or substance of liberty.

Giani : (trembling with rage, said:)

Do I hear a grunt? My stomach can't stand any more recriminations unless you are anxious to be shown the way out by your ersthwhile host.

I am what I am, doing what I am and, above all, content to be where I am. I am as straight as one could be in conviction and conduct. I need no reminders from rags and scally-wags.

I : (The Giani wasstill pouring his invective when I cut in and simpered back promptly).

Yes, it is a grunt, an echo from a pigsty. You forget we are at your house. Whether it is a grunt or a stunt, mine or thine, you shall presently know.

We look rags and scally-wags to Toms and toadies, fauning sycophants who bend their knees in servile adulation to the British. This is your master's voice. But you, the legions of you and your Tommy backers, are hardly a speck on us or a check on our surging spirits. You have no case. It is why you have started abusing your attorney. You scald and smite me with your sharp tongue. Offence is now your only defence. What you say now is the exact opposite of the love you exuded only the other day for the country and patriots. You don't understand because you don't want what we want.

Goodbye to honesty! You told lies about the truth. You gave me a warped and dishonest account of Ajaib Singh. We have got a glimmer of truth about what you have done to him and just can't stand the disgrace. You snare patriots to ruin. There is no knowing what tricks lie behind all this false facade. But, mind you, your tactics are too good to last long.

Giani : All this is too bad for a deshbhagat to say to a respectable person.

I : It is a vast pity you are never alike two days. You are a weather-vane, a wriggler, depending on the exigencies of the hour, switching sides by the second, a capricious and unfixable character over-reaching yourself without

any qualms, a liar of many facets, strong on the double-cross and double-talk. You sent up the mercury of hope only to let it drop suddenly. You came close to truism when you told me all Ajaib Singh had confided in you but then move away with the wind. How is it that you loved deshbhagats yesterday, but loathe them today? You started well but soon embarked on a wrong foot. Your initial enthusiasm has waned. Now you are trying to get out of the bargain.

Why this volatile beat of retreat and violent volte face in contrast to the first fantastic welcome? Why yesterday's guide has become today's goad? Why go sour on what you yourself had promised only the other day? Why not stay true to your plighted word? You have no visible character. You have turned somersaults and forfeited your pledge to me. This is a timid's trick. You can't look me in the eye. You should apologise for not being quite what you were. Your shift from a willing collaborator to a cold quizling confirms what a slippery stuff a typical turncoat is made of. I find you the best in the business of treachery, playing politics and tinkering with the lives and liberties of deshbhagats. Can you in conscience deny or put a false gloss over what you had, on your own, disclosed earlier? No, you can't unless you have achieved credible hyprocrisy. A colourless and faceless backslider, as you are, possessing a runaway tongue, out of character with your earlier word, we can trust you only to do the wrong thing. What we want is a ready hand and not a ready tongue. We want eagers, not laggards.

Traitors rave together. They do not take kindly to deshbhagats. You have turned traitor on us. Every traitor has a price. You name your figure. Your hyprocrisy shouts your worth, a slippery trimmer, a money spinner, toeing whichever way the wheels of fortune turn. Unless money is your motive and love of lucre jarred your sensibilities, I can't understand your "all or nothing" attitude, reversing the course you yourself set only the other day. A saleable commodity, as you are, is on bid. But we'll see that you do not sell us down the river any further.

Giani : Don't you brand me a traitor in advance, disparaging me without any data before you. You appear to be a new entrant to the guild. I am not a capitalist, a rupee-ruled rascal or a money-mad monster. I have nothing to hoard or hide. I live in contented

poverty. I believe that life should be lived in the present.

I : I refuse to accept all that you say about yourself. I am not unaware of your false modesty. You seem to me exceedingly rich, plentifully fat and more than comfortably well-off. I don't think teachers are paupers to that pitch. The teaching profession gives a man both dignity and standing in the world. It is very rare to find a teacher getting into other business. All that you profess is a pseudo pose, too good to be wholly true. Why do you pretend poverty or fake yourself as a victim of poverty? You are not alone in this. Poverty is international. Like every teacher, you have the gift of tongue. You should teach more, talk less. Inwardly, you chuckle in your riches, a slicker living in a smart new house and the conveniences of a town, a stolid and smugly affluent life of a domestic bliss, too happy to be unhappy for the poor country. It is another tale with me, a wanderer, doing nothing for a living, passing deadly days on the run in shallows.

You are the sort we already have. I have had experience of crooks of all kinds in top hats and in jags and rags. You pontificate, blaming the whole world, a sinister man, forswearing honour and principle for personal interest, a British spook, who niggles the men in power for pelf to replenish your income. The plea of "no raise in pay" may be due to the abysmal standard of teaching in national schools.

I find that you edit twists with false humility. It is a sordid world sullied by liars and tricksters. I should not have readily taken you upon your word, had not you spoken with deceptive sincerity. You have said all that you wanted to. This just is not so. You have a cook, a gardener and one or two casuals. You live in the big time of a lazy and luxurious life in a stunning and stucco house with a splendidly disciplined garden blooming with every hue of flowers, a luscious orchard heavy with fruit, mellow lawns and creeper covered walls. You are too much of a professional, a good preacher but a very bad practitioner, a teacher trickster. Your two hats won't help you. Seldom has a master played so much the school master even with his own pupils as you have with a non-pupil patriot. I am now clear that you have only a sympathy of hatred with us, deriving delight from the distress of deshbhagats. You do not lack reason for

losing your head. Respect and trust are mutual. Your borrowed arrogance and hectoring tone are a sad commentary on your profession and prudence. It is sham and shady characters, like you, who adore pompous piffle and contribute a more than usual quota to the casualties and calamities of the nation. Your role is out of character with the part traditionally played by patriots. Your conduct is the measure of what has gone wrong with our national mentality.

We deshbhagats do not expect to be received with red carpets nor do we want anybody to meet us halfway. I never expected you to declare social graces. But I did expect from a teacher a higher standard of rectitude and still a higher sense of patriotism. We set you only one task and you have failed us. You have flagrantly put a damper on our mission. The freedom movement which had so far floundered from crisis to crisis has now lots of teeth. We won't tolerate its prestige to slump any further. Never was our stock higher in the eyes of the people. Our road is no longer broken or bumpy, dark or dirty. We have completed the emotional integration of the people. No power on earth can now snuff out the spark of freedom. You should not equate friends with non-friends nor should you stick your nose into our affairs, provoking us into swearing vengeance. Teachers, preachers, everybody must discipline himself to help the national cause.

Giani : (Still wild with annoyance, wrinkled his forehead and bellowed).

Don't you go blue on me and outstrip the bounds of dignity and decorum and sully my profession for some imaginary defaults. What you allege is plain silly. We teachers are the makers of what mankind is today, dispellers of darkness, harbingers of light and awareness. You treat teachers as antiques. You are today what you claim to be because of us. Your outburst is a boomerang in a bad way of what we had done to mankind in a good way. What I say is a truth and what you say is a political argument.

I : I am not questioning your teaching profession but your conduct as a crusty teacher, by-passing deshbhagats, poking sharp epithets at them. My respect for teachers is too fulsome to fail or faulter. But your tongue is sharper than the sword. You have a long tongue and a wide mouth. The teaching profession

would be still better if you did not speak quite so much. Besides, we have many stale and incompetent teachers who soil the best minds of their youthful audience.

This is our last bid. The destiny of the country lies in the victory of our cause. We have pledged to the country the best within us. An independent country in which the policies are geard to the needs of the people is sure to go forward to a promising future. While you sulk and roost, we will go ahead with our work on a gambit, a carefully calculated stratagem. No amount of tempests of bad tempers and dressing-downs can deflect us from the difficult and delicate path we have chosen. We have suffered, striven and struggled. Our motto is "Test and trial and struggle and sacrifice". We are out to face rough weather and are pledged to "Do or Die". There would be hell of a row if the deshbhagats were to come and see your rope tricks for themselves. It is for deshbhagats to help the country through its travails. We are now in a position to have minds of our own. This is a heaven-sent chance for action. We are sure to succeed.

Giani : (made the tart comment in a huff).

When will deshbhagats win? Deshbhagats of your stamp have done nothing beyond an occasional dip of the oar.

I : You are repeatedly wrong, looking incredibly as blind as a bat.

Giani : (getting peeved, looked hard at me like a boxer in the ring).

You are a fool, intruding into private premises.

I : No. I don't agree. I have always disagreed with fools.

Giani : No, you are. How I wish you live to overgrow your folly. You'll realise what I say when you get to my age.

I : Call me a fool if you must. Folly and bravery go together. But know you must that it is bravery, which fools call folly, that will get us independence. It is only such fools who stand up and defy colonists. The wise submit to them squeamishly. I am not that wise. Wisdom is a virtue of the weak.

You have been playing me for a decadent fool. I must be a fool to have mistaken you from your polished

veneer for something of a gentleman. You blandly defame us when nobody dare stare at us. It is you who are very kindly obliging us by blaming us. Is it a fool's way to ferret out foreigners boldly? It is these fools who have some time such accidental flashes of dazzling intelligence that they won't draw on your wisdom and demur or delay the day of deliverance. We don't believe in wasteful wisdom waiting. It is time you learnt wisdom from fools. Your suggestion is a long shot, tantamount to throwing spanners in our work. The world is moving fast. We Indians alone are old timers today. Deshbhagats don't believe in low or slow tactics. Gradualism is worse than treason. We won't listen to your counsel of delay and despair.

You must be a good man to laugh at deshbhagats so easily. Little do you realize that it is no time to play pokers with patriots. A deshbhagat is not a fair game for a joke. We cannot deprecate your unedifying misbehaviour and ribald laughter too strongly. You better rue your folly in keeping us from our mission. It is unfortunate that a fence straddler, a weak-kneed coward with self-interest as his patriotism, should have the temerity to say and do all this muck. Your mask has slipped. You are a sell-out, finding happiness in our misery. Won't you drop off your pretence, sanctimonious hyprocrisy and subterfuge? You talk having nothing to say. You have been saying one thing but doing another in the backyard. We are now wise enough not to allow our foolish friends to choose our enemies for us. We are not going to be clobbered by cronies of your brand. The sooner we go our separate ways the better.

Giani : (Frowned, pulling at his moustache).

Yes, you go your way and I mine. I can't tolerate you to browbeat me into a scape-goat.

I : (I returned the frown).

You have goaded me to extremes. You ask for trouble and you will have it. You have burnt your fingers and we our boats. You will squeal when we get to work on you. We are going to settle it right away. We deshbhagats are good or bad with a vengeance—good to the good and bad to the vicious. Traitors would be made sapless. They will have no

reprieve. We will take them in their defaults and defections. We will be swift at reckoning.

Giani : (This brought matters to a crunch all the more. He blazed and exploded with indignation. A further flurry of exchanges followed. The talk escalated into a near tussle).

Get cracking, you deshbhagats, a small, shapeless and negligible commodity.

I : Why are you sniping at me in hysterics? Why all these scowls and curses? Why this revolution in attitude? When you make up your mind, you lose your head. A teacher, even if exasperated, should be incapable of indignation. We expect a better behaviour from a teacher who tailors our images, samples our wares and sets notes to our conduct and character. The teaching profession could not have lent you harsh overtones or made you an irritable crank.

Giani : All this is in bad taste. You cannot expect from a teacher more than what the society gives him. The teacher in our society is held in disdain. The tedium of teaching and lean living kills dash and drive and devil and devilry.

I : I have taken my own soundings and also verified externally the lolly-pop of your promises as utterly false and phony. You would be ticketted as a traitor, a boaster, out for some unseemly swagger, playing ducks and drakes with the national cause. You are in cohort with the British. But treason, however lucrative, is bad business. Treason breeds more treason.

On the contrary, we deshbhagats are in our best nick, practical and down-to-earth. Our hard, slogging work is sure to succeed. Deshbhagats, however, small, shapeless or negligible in your opinion, are die-hard patriots, shrewd and empirical.

Giani : But to reason is no treason.

I : No, it is not. But your crass hyprocrisy is. The reason touted by you is that of an imperialist stooge, a British Trojan Horse playing horse with me, living in the fulness of British blessings, spending much of your time on your knees. We know the side on which your bread is buttered. You are different and difficult now, as if you have swallowed a stick.

Giani : I protest against your facetious remarks. I am not snoopy. I am nobody's tool or stooge. I won't stick my neck out to do the job for you either. My answer is a resounding "No". Your mere label "deshbhagats" won't prove a soft-sell technique. The label is a mere publicity ploy.

I : We don't want you to stick your neck out to do anything for us. But, mind you, you are sticking your chin out for somebody else and we are going to break it. The jig is up. You haven't the right perspective on ethics. A malefactor, as you are, should better keep from our mission. You have invested nothing in the national cause except a lot of crooked conversation. You have done your worst to my prejudice. Any amount of devious trickery cant't hoodwink us. None of your heaviest salvos fired off at us can deter us. You may scoff your fill. You may deride or revile us. We will not budge. While we are moved by a real altruism, you are a genuine fraud, a froward and outrageous man, making more noise than news.

Giani : You are unnecessarily bursting at the seams at the wrong place and with the wrong person. You seem to be on a tongue-lashing errand! I have no punches to pull, no stake and no concern, whatsoever. Your charges are as offensive as they are unfounded. You are angling for a foreign financed mission, setting off fire-works at dissentients. Won't you call the bluff, as already warned by me, leave me alone, go your way, you and Ajaib Singh, wherever you can find him ?

I : (I shouted revenge on traitors. I swore at the Giani, telling him to get out of our way).

Why do you round on patriots? Why do you dicker with deshbhagats? Why are you snorting at me? It is galling to find you playing politics with the lives and liberties of deshbhagats. shovelling dust into their wounds, rubbing spices into their longtime bruising burns to make them smart more. What an outrageous situation it is : a Giani giving a slip to deshbhagats.

Even though a Giani teacher belonging to a particular sect, as you are, you should not allow national interest to lapse in a denominational institution. You should stop blinking at the reality and come to terms with the facts, Your ratings and ravings are out of step,

Your talk is replete with malevolent attack on freedom-fighters. We can't be friends with you. You seem to be still in the British camp, soft on the whites, an imperialist flunkey, playing the British lacky. It is no time to indulge in histrionics, unbecoming of your pose as a godly Giani. It is time we saved the country from rack and ruin. We are working for a gracious way of life in an independent India. Your about-face and cynicism have shocked us grievously, putting, as they do, spokes in our way, making heavy weather of it for us. Why raise a storm and put sand in the weather? What you say is a recipe for disaster and permanent subjugation. Expediency comes to you before consistency. I can quote you against you.

Giani: (Livid with anger, he stamped the ground, shouting).

Stay quiet. This should be the end of it. I am through with you. Your criticism of me is just "sour grapes". I can no longer put up with such a painful barrage of vilification. Never before has any guy dared singe the beard of a respectable citizen the way you have on my own grounds. You must leave to live and let me live. You have gone the whole hog to bring me to bay. I shall not have it any more.

I: It is you who have set off a most nasty verbal violence. Why this edging backwards? Why lace intemperate utterances with malacious lies? You have deliberately chosen to misunderstand the mission, slammed the door in my face and stood across my path. You have run out and forced a show-down on us. We accept it. We will give you no peace. You will see before long what a swift retribution we mean. You will soon find yourself caught on the wrong side of the fence for your fugitive appearances.

Don't you play a cruel hoax of British politics on us. Don't you bite unless you are prepared to swallow. Your complacence is staggering. You are gleefully indifferent to the fact that people work and live in scrabbling poverty, seething with frustration. Imbalance of wealth and values has tipped and tilted the scales too much. Something is fundamentally wrong. It is why two long hands can't feed a small mouth in a country with endemic poverty. It is why the people led by patriots have taken to the streets to expel the British out of India.

Any fate is better than bondage. The issue has touched the hearts and passions of the people. The country

is emerging from its dark shadows. The masses are firmly moored to the interest of the country. It is a flood of eager humanity seeking early emancipation. They treat the British with supreme contempt and no longer burn candles to them. They hate anything and everything white on two legs. The hate-campaign has reached its crescendo. The siren call of the nation wants everyone of us to do our bit. It is time we dissociated ourselves from our own past. We have the right, the duty and the responsibility to respond to the call. Would you want to be one of us or prefer to stay on the periphery? We do not believe in neutralism. We demand a violent dislike of our oppressors. All thinking people are agreed that the present state of affairs is sure to change in a matter of days. But for the vacillation of sycophants for all their panache, we would have High Noon this very summer. The British are sure to quit. The vacuum will soon make many good men great men.

Giani: You are cross and caustic for nothing. Why should you behave as a chronic stickler, fussy contender and habitual pretender in a matter which has normally nothing in common with my teaching profession? How on earth do you denounce and defame and heckle and harry me for some supposed omissions and commissions which are beyond my ken? Your attack is infested with malicious distortions and downright mis-statement of facts. How to extricate myself out of this elaborate cobweb that you have woven around me passes my comprehension. You are robbing me of whatever little respect and respite I have had in my limited world. Pray leave me here and now.

"You are a drag on our mission" blazed I.

"What is it" smirked he.

I: Deshbhagats are everything that you have chosen to dub and more. You are playing novices to the annoyance of deshbhagats. Your rational is anti-national. Can you or any Indian have any respect or respite in a slave India? We can't allow this issue to simmer any longer. You must stop playing off your waggery on us or we shall punish you to good purpose. You will come by the worst. You have had your loudest say too much. None of your non-sense for us any more. Your sarcasm, snarl and serpentine innuendo have made us wise in the ways of the world. It is you who have manufactured all this put on affair and wasted a

month to do a day's work. It shall be you to bring it to an end. You have throughout prevaricated with an art that comes from practice. You had the whole day to yourself previously but you did nothing. Your filibustering tactics are throwing our race into reverse, frustrating our fight for freedom. You are playing your perfideous part to perfection. It is you who scuttle our scheme.

On the contrary, we deshbhagats are little posted in hypocrisy. We are not as bad as good men of your brand. Our hands are clean and our hearts pure. We need no career credentials. The people know us too well! We have built up a considerable reservoir of goodwill among the people. You tried to outwit me but could not make it. You may try all your wiles but you will never be able to convince us, much less convert us. It would be no use sticking to your stance and your reckless piety. You are nothing but a stickler for religious formality.

Giani : (gone visibly pale and yet trying to conceal his lost soul).

Won't you stop all this kite-flying, this empty shelling and automatic firing from a slippery ground? To what purpose, if I assure you, this is going wide of the mark? I have nothing to do with this outlandish mission which can be nothing beyond scratching the surface. Ajaib Singh was one of the multitude of my pupils. There is no knowing what he did subsequently or where he is at present. He, like scores of others, has disappeared in the distance.

I : You are painfully talkative, countering my questions with questions. Money has loosened your tongue. I have a good memory for bad things, a poignant memory of what you had disclosed to me in the not very distant past. You disavow and deny what you vouchsafed to me only the other day. Wasn't it an easy promise? If it wasn't, why are you now refuting yourself out of your own mouth? I can never consider your word better than doubtful. You have, as a sop, kept up appearances with us. I never knew whether you were actually soft or hypocritical. On being found out, you are taking refuge in rudeness. You are angry as an afterthought. Try no more tricks and play no more games. Scores of absolute lies belatedly cooked up and backed by biting sneers cannot obliterate the indeliable commitments made by you only the other

day about Ajaib Singh, his mission and his mind. You have reached the point of no return and run the gauntlet beyond recovery.

You can't dispel my conviction that you are a confident and an undercover agent of the Police, notorious for name-dropping. I have got a glimmer of your game. You have given away my friend Ajaib Singh and got him arrested and he must be pining in some jail in a state of harrowing imprisonment. I am an outlaw and you in singular good odour with the Government. You had better turn me to the Police and get me arrested too. I shall die by Ajaib Singh. I am not going to leave this place. It does not take an Oedipus to divine that you must have already informed the Police about me. But I know my ropes. My fellow deshbhagats are around. If I fail to return to my base for another hour or so, they will come up with their arms and ammunition and blow up your palatial house, your family and all, knowing, as we do, what you are and what you have done to our comrade Ajaib Singh. The deshbhagats carry bombs and bullets for the comfort of defectors and traitors. They are in deadly earnest within my call. I will cut them loose on you. The whole wasp's nest would be after you and you will have all the hell upon you. We will jolt you out of your pose of pious duplicity and show you, at your cost, whether it is kite-flying, empty-shelling or killing the killer and the blood-spiller. What you have said just now is more than enough for them to go berserk and lope through your house and all.

Have a bit of sense and stop polemics. You promised me the moon and the stars on my first visit. The olive branch so readily offered by you at that time is now all full of thorns. Compared to this, when I have come to you with a better branch laden with bouquets, I find you playing with red embers. Despite my repeated entreaties, we are still too far apart. Whether we implore you or not is all one to you. You have brusquely turned down my request for help. You have not responded to reason either. You have done your worst to subvert our efforts. You unaccountably failed to more swiftly and negotiated a cagey deal whereby my mission has been a near failure. I will blame any such failure on you. The insult will not go unanswered.

Before I make a final break, I give you a warning.

Death stalks you. It is not possible to condone your peccadilloes, your callow indifference and callous intransigence. You are gaunt and obstinate. While we stimulate, you stifle the movement. You oppose whatever I propose. I put it point-blank to you that you know where Ajaib Singh is and that you are doing all this on purpose. Whatever the cost, we deshbhagats are determined to crush traitors with sledge-hammers and every weapon we can get hold of and eliminate them by the classical method of assassination. Nobody can break with us and live. Any second may be your last. You are a walking corpse.

I have tried to see right through you and found that you are not transparent. You have the look of a man heading for a good thrashing. We will nudge you in the ribs and smash you to splinters. You have embarked on a long shot in order to try and test our power and patience. You just want us to show you our limits, catch you by the scruff of the neck and punch you on the nose. I swear vengeance. You shout for the Police. Nothing can sway us. Nothing can stay us. You will find us hard-liners, as tough as my talk. We'll get you where we want you or kill you stone dead. We are not a few but a multitude. We want to see Ajaib Singh and work in a dynamic double against the British now that they are in trouble. You should stop stoking a volcano and either emigrate or hibernate.

Your hoax has passed and your quicksands run out. You and I are now the best of enemies. You keep your distance. We don't want your assistance. You should be punished for your own good. Whether you roar or rage, we will come through. Your rude brush off is unforgiveable. You are a rag of a man. We will mend you or end you. You will presently feel the hot end of the poker, and repent your wicked words. You are a plump target on the brink of eternity,making your own funeral arrangements. The deshbhagats are famous in arms and blood. When the mood takes them, they are among the most dangerous lot in the field. They will tear into you like hungry hordes. You have slopped our mission and provoked an explosion. Your game is as good as over. This is my last contact with you. The next would be at the point of a gun. We would spare none of your family to tell the tale. You must accept your fate now. By Jove, you can't avoid the deluge. You have lost ground and you will

soon find yourself in rough waters. The storm is gathering. It is coming. It is time you atoned for your past blunders. It is time you said more to yourself than to me. You can hedge the danger only by coughing up our comrade or we will wrench him out of your hands. Do it. We don't give a damn how you do it.

Brinkmanship broke him, shook his poise and drove him over the edge. The tense and tough talk did it and cut the iron edge. The threat sank home. It proved a watershed. The last straw broke the camel's back. It provoked shudders in the Giani. It struck the right nose and stole his thunder. It took him by storm and made his face burn. I was on the offensive. The strategy of terror tactics worked. It scared the wits out of him. The staggering broadsides, delivered, as they were, with bitter resignation and utmost sharpness and severity charged with conviction and confidence and a ring of genuine protestations in my voice, unleashed tremendous terror and sent a shiver down his spine, took the wind out of his sails and unnerved him completely. He saw vehement protests in my eyes and iron in my will and voice.

All this convinced him that deshbhagats were potential killers on the war-path ! He took my spurious threats seriously. A sudden slump in his morale was more than visible. He felt small and timid. He got into an immediate fright, fidgeted and wilted under the threat and, nervously wringing his hands, became totally withdrawn. Finding me more acid tongued, he felt the squeeze, sagged and subsided into a sullen silence. An uneasy quiet settled on him for seconds. He was now in a most awful flunk, smarting under the rough and rude rebuff.

The exchanges between us showed that neither side was bluffing. We had talked ourselves hoarse. He flunked the confrontation and recoiled when I was still in the saddle to carry on the exchanges. His vacant looks stopped me short. He was no longer easy on the subject. His anger betrayed him. Fretting is but a confession of weakness. He roared and ran away. He came down from arrogance to humiliation. He choked, swaggered and swore. He tried to create a detente atmosphere, mollify and re-establish rapport with me, smooth the situation and bring it back into balance. The bravado in his voice was gone. He was now

entirely changed in looks and outlook, Why? He had had enough dressing down. A very strict demeanour smoothed the rough edges in him, rang the bell and proved a shot-in-the-arm.

I won the war of words. The words proved lethal weapons, a goad to action. He fought dourly but then expressed breathless cooperation. It was a rapid-fire confrontation, a nasty 100-minutes by all accounts. He shifted his stiff stance into an apologia and, with feeling and lump in his throat, he pleaded :—

Giani : Listen, why this virulent language? Why tilt at a poor teacher, a mere nobody to you ? You have quoted me out of context, got it all wrong and taken offence at slights. Your reading is a mis-calculation. I have been grievously misunderstood.

I : No. I got it right. It is not I but you who have gone wickedly wrong. We won't listen before biting your nose off.

Giani : I say you have over-read my words or, shall I say, you have constrained my words in a welter of words too much. You are certainly beset by misgivings. All that you feel about me stems from a massive misconception. A chasm of mistrust has opened up between us. You have unnecessarily stern views about me and thrown at me all the mud you could muster. I apologise for the short-lived rupture.

I : No, this is not a case of misconception, miscalculation, misunderstanding, mistrust or any misgivings. It is not possible to follow your fantastic logic: "I 'll admit I was wrong if you 'll admit I was right !" They say that "Whenever you are wrong, admit it ; whenever you are right, shut up." Will you come to the real issue forthwith ?

Giani : I am an old man, slow in understanding and action. No one is sicker than a teacher on his day off.

I : Yes, an old man, full of life and mischief !

Giani : You have said too much about too small a fry and made far too much of too trifle an affair. A teacher is more sceptical than cynical. I never meant any harm to any of you or your noble cause. I never intended any indignity or injury to you or to your mission. I wish you well. You have my blessings on the rightful course you have chosen. I pledge my readiness to help your mission. Believe me, my heart beats for you. I have had many difficulties in my

way. I wish you could appreciate them. I could not belie the trust reposed in me by Ajaib Singh to a stranger as you are to me. Besides, I am insular by nature, having the Englishman's love of privacy, always living in social exclusiveness, keeping myself to myself. Despite my poor position, I have a happy home, free from domestic broils. My wife and my children are my club. I read no papers and, as such, am much behind with the news. It is not possible to shake the habit so late. But now I do feel the sincerity of purpose behind your youthful zeal.

I : But you have all the airs and graces of society. Whatever you are, this is not the time to discuss social status. Let us be brief and quick. Do it and let us stay good friends.

Giani : Already little is left of our friendship now. I'll do all I can to restore it.

I had taken your words in earnest and conveyed them to Ajaib Singh. I had, however, failed to persuade him to see you. He was chary of meeting with you in view of your insistence to go home. He was, with all this, very much interested to know as to how and why you have again made up your mind to spy on the British for the Japanese. It was decided between us that I should see you at the waiting hall of the Taran Taaran Railway Station at the appointed time and that he would follow me at some distance and hang about as much near the place as possible, depending on the exigencies of the situation. His intention was to see what was up and, if possible, have an earful of our talk without meeting you. It was under his instructions that I had made my excuses to you and told you that I had failed to contact him. Again, it was under his instructions that I had requested you to stay at my house for the night. He had told me that he might slip into my house at some odd hour of the night in order to meet you for a couple of minutes and then hasten back to his place of hiding. He came to my house at about midnight and went away immediately on being told what had transpired between us. He told me that he had looked for us at the waiting hall and, finding us nowhere, gone around the platform. He saw us sitting at the platform, away from the railings where he was. He found us in earnest conversation together. He leaned against the railings, straining to gather

some fragments of our talk. You were under a mask, speaking in undertones. He could make out nothing. He got scared by some four men moving about between us and the railings and shot away into the town. I later told him that our talk had run upon himself.

(What a slip on either side ! The spy slipped through my fingers. I slipped through his fingers no less. He escaped capture and I exposure. Each of us was running into a killer. We missed each other by the skin of our teeth. The change in the venue of the meeting saved the situation. The precaution worked. I had made sure that everything was secure. The mask, the meeting in the dark and the suppressed talk saved it all too. That I did not take the Giani's bait to accompany him home was still another very lucky save! A disturbed spy is a frightened man. And a frightened man is a dangerous man. Espionage and counter-espionage is a game of death. A spy and a counter-spy live with death. Both Ajaib Singh and I were chasing death).

I : We have talked long and loud. We have debated much and done little. We better get started and end it once for all with dispatch.

Giani : Just a minute and I would have finished. I find that I am being misunderstood and made the target of unmerited approbrium. I request a correction. I have as keen a sense of patriotism as the next man. I wish all deshbhagats well. I am anxious to make peace with them. You have taught me a telling lesson worth the knowing. I have, therefore, decided that whatever the feelings and reaction of Ajaib Singh may be, I should place you in contact with him and fade out of the picture. My heart bleeds. I deeply deplore the delay being attributed to me by you.

I : With all your expressions of contrition and patriotism you seem to have heart but no mind. I came to you for help but got hard names for an answer. No amount of excuses can explain away the inexplicable. Nothing short of my immediate meeting with Ajaib Singh can put you in the clear. Whatever Ajaib Singh's instructions to you, a good Giani should not have lent himself to any counterfeiting of the truth. Teachers should never run out on their promises and principles. It is still time you got our real meaning

and critical feeling. Give me a hard and fast assurance this time. The previous temporary treaty had a tough going and failed to stand the test of time. I hope it won't be a respeat performance of a gangster taking his victim for another ride ! My experience of you is none-too-happy. I have enough of your tantarums. Once bitten, I feel twice shy. Your vague platitudes and promises have no standing beyond giving a fragile consolation. You take a tumble in no time. I have lost faith in you, notwithstanding your grandiloquent assurances. You are sauve and slippery. Anybody who believed you would believe anything.

Giani : "I will do it now" said he shortly. Per-adventure I fail you this time, you will be free to wring my head off. I am now speaking in dead earnest. This time I promise good faith and swear a solemn oath by God. I shall mince matters no more. I have taken full account of your wish. I assure you I am a passionate fan of freedom no less. I am a patriot as much as any for all that you have said about me.

I : Don't play me false again. Why swagger and swear, making a shelter of your oaths? Why make our oaths a deceit between us ? You had sworn by God your most binding oath and yet you soon became interactable and fai.ed me utterly. Mind you, Giani Sahib, you will suffer in expiation of your false oaths, your bitter tongue and the waste of precious time of a deshbhagat rotting at your door. I must know how much you would help and how soon.

Giani : Let us end mutual snarling. We got into a bit of small talk. I am sorry for myself and I hope you are sorry for what has happened. You'll kindly excuse me for being remiss in courtesy. It shall be done as you wish. I repent that I didn't do it sooner.

I : It's good you repent, provided you do it no more.

(On this, we did mutual soft-soaping, adjusted our attitude and switched to confidence and conciliation, expecting it would pay off. His earlier admission had created an opening for me and now he stood edged into a corner, I continued to nag him, urging him to act quickly).

I : I reciprocate your move for a reconciliation. The tough talk was off the cuff. I got fidgety about your breach of faith. You better come with us. Why get out of line or do it languidly ? Let us cross the Rubican and do it firm and fast,

I had purposely generated sufficient heat and tension to make the Giani observe the provisional treaty. I knew that unless I kept up the tension, the fragile treaty would not stick. After all, it was an extremely slippery, uneasy, unconventional and unwritten treaty without the testimony of any witness. My verbal brawl and sparring with the Giani strengthened my muscles and gave me vast amusement. I smiled inwardly. He was utterly deflated. I had tried every strategem, flattering words, bitter looks and lethal language. While earlier I had coaxed him, cajoled him, now I commanded him. Though cautiously optimistic, I again saw straws in the wind, a passionate belief rooted in the tension that law would presently catch up with the elusive spy. The past frustration rejuvinated, phoenix-like, fresh hopes of a break-through. A gleam of hope glimmered as the promise radiated assurance. The adventure took on a new look and again entered a hectic phase. Things restarted going my way. I was no longer coy about my success. However, knowing as I did from bitter experience of the recent past, I warned myself to expect the worst from the slippery hike, the elusive game and the fickle game-keeper.

VI.—ENCOUNTER WITH THE SPY

The ominous talk ended. The Giani and I now eased up, dropped reserve, re-opened friendship, exchanged simulated smiles and greeted each other effusively with extravagent civilities in an improvised patch-up in the manner of a politician using mellifluent and bromidic words. The hostile atmosphere died down provisionally. I advanced for a handshake. He extended a firm hand, too firm to lose grip on the trigger and the target any further. It was now a scene of bonhomie between us.

Giani : Let's make it tomorrow.

I : No, today. And now, right now. I want it this very minute straightaway except that I would stop briefly to collect my kit from a place in the town.

(Now I wanted it swift and sure. But I had a problem. On the one hand, I wanted time to arrange a raid with the local Police. On the other, I did not want to give the Giani any time to establish contact with the spy. I had not yet got over black rage in my heart, feeling, as I did, that he had trussed me previously. I hit upon a via media. I should wean him from his house, take him along with me, drop him at a lone place away from the road and go post-haste to the Police Station, telling him I would be back with my kit within minutes. It might take me longer to return but he would expect me back any moment, too soon to enable him to do any mischief. I asked him to dress quickly. He wanted about half an hour to do his toilet. We compromised on half the half hour).

We hastened towards the town on foot. I kept up the questioning as we walked. I left him at an out-of-the way kerb enroute, asking him to wait for me to return. He did not question why I was not taking him along, knowing, as he did, from my behaviour on the previous occasion that I, being a spy, kept my movements strictly secret.

I walked my quickest to the town, burrowed through the traffic, caught a tonga on the corner of a street and made the best of my way to the local Police Station. This was the peak-rush hour in an otherwise slovenly town. Traffic was heavy. People were thick on the narrow pavements, dodging out into the road. The tonga escaped a cart by a sudden wriggle but careered around a street corner, clipped the curb and edged a pedestrian off the

pavement. A jay-walker stepped off the kerb and ran into the tonga. The driver had a brush with a police constable who alleged that he had broken the rule of the road. He had some side-talk with the constable and returned. He was rash and reckless again. I warned him to do defensive driving. He promised and proceeded.

I contacted Pandit Gian Chand, a prompt and portly Sub-Inspector Incharge of the Police Station. He was in uniform. He reverted to civilian garb quickly and with a Head Constable and five Constables in plain clothes, all masked from bow to chin and armed with revolvers, followed me in a separate tonga about a furlong behind me. One of the constables carried handcuffs and the Sub-Inspector's uniform in a suit-case. I instructed the Sub-Inspector to pull up the blinds of the tonga and keep this distance throughout as I did not want the Giani to see them. Luckily, heat waves diffused vision. I pulled at the place where the Giani was waiting for me.

I : Shall we go ?

Giani : Yes.

He took the front seat and led the way, the horse swishing his tail into his face all the time. He appeared to have been stunned by the warning given to him by me at his house so much that he hardly spoke a word on the way. I thought things through during the time taken to travel from Taran Taaran to the target. It was a nine-odd-mile, nine-anna journey towards Amritsar on the Taran Taaran-Amritsar Road. We travelled after a regulation ten-mile an hour. After a little less than an hour's bone-shaking and creaking journey, the tipping and bumping tonga, click-clacking tunefully, crunched and screeched to a halt at the instance of the Giani. We parked the tonga handy and got down.

Amritsar was just a brief five miles from this place. The Giani pointed to a gurdwara some three furlongs away from the road, saying "that's Gurdwara Sangrana Sahib and it was there that I had met Ajaib Singh last". The Gurdwara, which was off the beaten track from this place, dominated the skyline of the country-side. We could hear peals of musical hymns coming from the gurdwara indicating that a Sikh congregation was on. Ajaib Singh was believably attending the sermon at the time. It was considered unsafe to contact him, much less catch him, from the congregation. Therefore, I decided in my mind not to go inside the gurdwara as a precaution against any allegation of defiling the place or disturbing the devotees by our action. Moreover, Ajaib Singh was likely to create a scene by instigating fanaticism and run away in the melee. A prominently high shisham

tree situated in the midst of man-high fodder-crops and thick bushes about one furlong from the road and two from the gurdwara promised a good rendezvous for the meeting. I told the Giani that I would abide under the tree and that he should fetch Ajaib Singh there.

I : Please don't be long. You know how to have a way with him.

Giani : I will come soon.

I : How soon ?

Giani : It won't be five minutes. I hope to be back right away.

(Like others in this part of the country, the Giani appeared to have an optimistic view about time as if five minutes were an equivalent of half an hour).

I : Don't be so quick; it can't be so soon.

Giani : I will take my time. It may be a bit longer, depending on the situation inside the gurdwara.

The Giani was now so pliable to appease my potential nemesis that he complied with my directions without any back-talk. His only worry was to arrange my meeting with the spy and get away, never to be mixed up with deshbhagats again ! I now left the future course of things to the very man whom hardly an hour before I had treated scurvily and reviled so savagely.

Things moved with lightning rapidity from now onwards. The Giani went scampering off ahead by a route of sorts through the overgrowth. On a signal from me, the police party joined me on the double. I took them speedily and swung through the place to see it first hand. I told them that the man wanted by the police was expected at the tree any moment and that they should throw an invisible cordon and billet themselves within supporting distance at such strategic points in the crops as were calculated to intercept him and cut off his likely retreat. I warned them that the man was sure to show fight and that we should risk no surprise. They cocked their guns, held them handy and took positions in the rustic and rural country.

For my part, I ambled across to the tree. Unluckily, the tree was moated by about a foot-deep water, now wide, now narrow but compassed by an easy leap. Hurriedly, I beat down its lower branches, streamlined my turban, hitched up my trousers, shed my shoes and shot up to recci the topography and take my own soundings of the place. Many a twig snapped under me before I reached a point overlooking the countryside. I ran

my eye over the place and took its mental inventory to see how the land lay and how the wind blew. I sized it up vis-a-vis its approach from the gurdwara. I also took a hasty look round at great distances. That was the way I figured the position in one sweeping glance. I then slithered down quickly, dodged and burrowed myself behind a thick cluster of bushes in such a position that I could see the Giani and Ajaib Singh coming from the gurdwara towards the tree without their being able to see any of us.

Five minutes and we were all over the place, a perfect setting for the long-dreaded "D" day. I posted look-outs so that all possible escape routes were covered. I could not afford to risk a second failure. Everybody sat in ambush in eerie silence, waiting, with baited breath, for the much-coveted big moment and the supreme target time. An extremely tense and deeply emotional and crucial time was upon us. The strain of stealthiness in the midst of the overgrowth alive with swarms of fleas and mosquitoes was telling heavily on me. I was soon itching in a score of places on my bare arms and face.

Time ticked off. The Giani was able to coax Ajaib Singh out of the gurdwara after what seemed an eternity. He was seen heading towards the appointed tree in the company of a medium-sized Sikh with the puff of his turban billowing in the windy evening. I was braced for an encounter. Directly they flashed into view, I stood double for a sprint. My heart skipped beats. There were now some two small minutes between my patience and my prey. I was just one jump behind the man of the moment. It was a very tense, tough, nerve-testing and breath-taking moment, a moment of anticipation tingling with excitement, not so much because that an enemy agent was to be arrested as that I was soon to be set face to face to Ajaib Singh when my assumed identity was going to be uncovered. I now stood only a heart's beat from success.

No sooner did the Giani and his companion sit down under the tree than I again streamlined my turban, snaked my way with creeping caution through the tangled overgrowth, tiptoed and sallied forth towards them as silently and speedily as a flitting shadow as far as I could unseen. I was careful to avoid a heavy tread and suppress the shuffling of my feet with the stealth and passion of a cat running after an elusive mouse. This was my last spurt for victory. I nerved myself to a supreme effort. I was much of a runner. Besides, I had boosted my speed by doing daily running exercises. Speed promises surprise and success. Like a hungry hound released for the kill, I, with my left hand pressed to my face, leapt into the open, worked up a searing pace, dashed and shot to the twin-target. I

strained for every lick of speed I could out of my legs and ran my hardest. It was no longer a hide-and-seek but an open-and-leap affair.

The Giani and Ajaib Singh were sitting with their full beards in such a position that I could see them in profile. Like a sprinter, making a final dash towards the tape, I raced out with smashing force, made a lunge at Ajaib Singh and, in the twinkling of an eye, closed with him. He was wearing a kirpan (sword) whetted to razor sharpness. With his eyes snapped wide, he grabbed vainly for the kirpan in a bid to defend himself violently. I wrenched away the kirpan before he could get to it. A desperate person takes anything that happens to be handy. I was well on the target. I whipped my loaded revolver and holding it to his head menacingly, rasped out. "You are covered. You would be shot if you don't give in instantly." Simultaneously, I shed my guise and identified myself, panting I represented the law. This was how the grim secret of my identity and the mystique of secrecy was out. The disclosure proved a stunner. He was taken aback and transfixed with surprise. The element of surprise gave me an edge and start on him. I seized him by the scruff of his neck and clobbered him. The first blow was half the battle. He was caught completely off his guard at one fell swoop. But there was no disputing his strength. He was a husky, hefty and doughty youngman, full of fight and abundant courage, a martial figure, quite ferocious and fearsome, compact and muscular, ponderous and powerful and as fit as he could ever be. He was in the early prime of his life, and, as such, strong enough to throw any bobby over his shoulder. He was a man of big sizes, more heavy than high, about forty inches round the chest. I dived at his legs but he was too heavy for me to take on. However, he was as slack as a steamroller in the first or, at best, in the second gear. He was too slow and I blindingly fast. He displayed his muscle and made convulsive and full blast attempts to get loose and wrench himself free. He strained with a strength beyond his years to hold me off. In a flash, the Giani offered a tepid defence by putting a protecting hand over him, interposing his body between us. He strained Ajaib Singh to his side, pressed him to his heart, holding him close and long. But he was caught in the cross-fire. He now closed his eyes as if dazed.

It was a full scale fight. I was equally well up with either hand. I slapped him across his face, boxed his ears and punched his hawk nose. Jabs and punches were darted into his face in flurries of five or six. He was mostly soundly beaten about the head. He took the beating fair and square. I hailed down a storm of

blows in quick time. The blows tell the story faster than words. What now occurred happened much faster than one can tell. In view of his elusive character, I was taking no chances on a repeat. I was determined not to miss him for worlds. I hit without a miss and without giving him a chance to take the fight to me. His left arm was now hanging limp. It was why he failed to flail any counter-punches.

I collared him and kept at him till he slumped and went down heavily. He struggled to his feet, went into spin, wheeled off balance, keeled and circled down instantly. He rose again but again I threw him from his balance. He now crashed to the ground almost hysterical, moaning dreadfully. His fall was cushioned by the fodder crop.

He now went ultra defensive. He ducked and dipped his head in defence. He was on the front foot, pining for an opportunity to escape. But he was too slow and run down to slip away. Like a bitten leopard brought to bay, he nipped me with his long and razor sharp nails and gnashing teeth, slicing at my face and gashing my clothes to ribbons. My nails grazed his face and throat no less. We tugged at each other's hair and clothes, tearing them to pieces.

His turban was tipped over his face. I clutched his long hair, tore out a fistful of it, leaving the rest utterly unruly and straggling. Most of his hair was badly ravaged by the scuffle, swept down helter-skelter to his shoulders and all over his body. He did his hair by putting it back in its place with his hands and fingers many a time. He pushed the hair back from his forehead but it was too dishevelled to be rumpled easily. Tousled by the wind, his long wisps fell down over his forehead time and again. He pulled his hair up tight and smooth into a big knot. He tamed his beard and again tucked his scraggly hair into his loose turban. He adjusted his pliant turban as many times as he did his hair. His khaki shorts slipped at half-mast in the scuffle. He hitched up the shorts and smoothed his clothes quickly.

I shook him for a solid half-minute. His legs buckled and he sank slowly to the ground. He again got up and again I got him. He made frantic efforts to tear himself loose. Once I let him go and he fell plump on the ground. He leaned against the tree to give himself a breather. He now threw the fight, slumped to his knees and then crumpled all the way to the ground and could not get his balance again.

Meanwhile, the pseudo-deshbhagats shot out of their hide-outs, surged across the fields from all directions and came up

racing with one another, panting on their heels, shouting encouragement. One of them made more haste than speed and broke his leg in running into a flashing speed. Two others tackled the Giani while the rest converged on Ajaib Singh. One of them pinioned him behind his back. Some of them raised their sticks to bring them round with the terrific swipe straight across his broad shoulders but now that no fight was left in him and he had failed to get his balance after my blows had flung him off his feet, I dissuaded them from killing the killer.

The blood-tingling episode was up in a swift minute. History was made in just that one minute. I did it all in a breath. Things happened in no time. We took up our positions. The Giani brought Ajaib Singh to the fateful tree and the arrest was effected in a matter of a minute. It was like "we came, we saw, we captured".

This was how the episode of passage-at-arms between the Giani and myself proved a clincher. This was how my timely tiff with the Giani, though staggeringly simple and swift, gave quick dividends. It was a risky and dangerous brinkmanship, a date with death. Playing the part I did I was in a terrible spot. I ran the hazard of my life, coming, as I did, very near leaving my bones at the Giani's house. But it is always risk that brings top-class results—rewards or retributions, scintillating successes or humiliating reverses, prized achievements or tearful bereavements. It was a gamble: fate or fortune. Danger and risk should be every policeman's business. The dare in danger carries decorations or destructions. The case in point ultimately brought me reward and reputation. It was a risky but a rewarding job which transformed a fantasy and a fiction into a fact. "Adversity introduces a man to himself". It showed the real me. One learns a thing by living it.

This was how I had a brief but bitter date with the desperado, reasoned my way to him and got him from the godliness of the gurdwara to a grim drama. This was how my tenuous dream materialised and the nagging mystery simplified. The seeker and the sought met. Both Ajaib Singh and the Giani blanched and seemed to age ten years. In a flash, a shiver ran down their backs. A look of stupefaction came upon their faces. Both found it hard to believe it had really happened. I too rubbed my eyes in disbelief. Belief or no belief, a bloomy miracle happened with a bang. Though buffeted by frequent vicissitudes, the venture shaped up very well. It required faith and courage. I had never realised the piquant paradox that I was winning in losing at the railway station. Disguise, diplomacy and brinkmanship did it at last. My great day was the last day.

All in all, it proved a lucky swoop, a quick and quiet capture, a smooth and speedy sailing, as lightning as the lashing speed of a cyclone. What I had expected at the Taran Taaran railway station fairly quickly was now achieved much quicker. I chuckled at my success which looked so quick as if I had just stumbled on it. The spectacle unfolded itself and my luck held at last. I trailed my game and made my kill. This was my day, one of the greatest days of my cateer. I got what I had set out to get. My wish was gratified. The shot found its mark and the bait hooked the fish. It all worked out as planned. The worst and the roughest part of the drama and the delicate and difficult days were over. Ajaib Singh was arrested. I got him the hard way. It was I who had established his identity and ultimately it was I who effected his arrest three months apart. And only I knew what I had gone through during the brief blizzard just before I got the thrill of capture. This was all the more reason that I found it almost impossible to contain the sudden mirth and excitement, though such things had happened many a time over the years. This brought me relief from an age-long nagging worry. All the hustle and bustle subsided and I took quite a few deep breaths. It was one of the most exhilarating and moving moments for me. I won this round ; the ring got going. All this was as it should be, a good catch in a Sabbath's angling.

The Police party was no less glowing with happiness with their hearts pounding for joy and a thrill of exultation. They were cock-a-hoop, laughing up their sleeves on the round-up of the much-awaited man. To them, I snapped shortly, "Thank you. You will please keep it to yourself".

Ajaib Singh giggled nervously, violently trembling in every limb. With his face turned red and eyes gone bleary, he was writhing with pain, taking deep breaths. Sliva drooled from his mouth. He was badly bruised all over the body. He had also sustained some wrenched shoulder muscles. His face was suffused with blood. He made grimaces of acute pain and complained that his feet and legs were driving nuts. He braced himself by leaning on his left hand. He was so terrified that he was now a whimpering, huddled heap by the tree. But he did not scream his terror. He put his hand to his mouth and closed his eyes against the temptation to shriek. He was now like a fox that had lost its tail. He was all the time stealing gaping and uncertain looks in an effort to see Ismail in me !

Though I did not fit the picture of a fighting man, I fared quite well. Spirit is mightier than the body. I found for myself that we perform better under stress and that it is generally a situation that draws the best out of men. I got a horribly bruised face which weltered in blood quite a bit. I got a bad foot besides.

I had a two-days' growth of budding beard which, coupled with the bleeding face and the torn clothes, gave me the look of a rough and rugged fighter in battered battle-dress !

All of us were out of uniform. Therefore, the Sub-Inspector got back into his uniform and put the spy in handcuffs immediately. The spy lost colour by the second when we slipped the handcuffs around his wrist and clicked them.

I immediately slapped frantically at his pockets and all over his person to get anything lethal or illegal that he might have had on him. I went through his clothes, stripped him to his under-clothes and searched him from his skin out. Nothing of interest was recovered.

Two of the "deshbhagats", a Head Constable and a Constable, were immediately assigned to collect his articles from the gurdwara and see over the place. The following articles, literature and figures were found in a heap of miscellaneous collections from his room at the gurdwara :—

(1) A long-distance radio set tuned to a Rangoon wave-length.

(2) Strength of the Indian Army in various cantonments in India comprising the Eastern Command, the Southern Command and the Northern Command and places near the Indo-Burma border.

(3) Strength of the British Navy with particular reference to its deployment in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal.

(4) Military Training Institutions in India.

(5) Statistics regarding arrests made, collective fines imposed and other measures adopted by the British Government during the political and communal disturbances in the country.

(6) A note on the political situation in India generally. The data collected by him vis-a-vis the Punjab was incorporated in the note.

(7) He, working with comrades, had collected the following guide-maps :—

(*i*) A map of the Indian railways.

(*ii*) A map of the Indian roads.

(*iii*) A map of the railways and roads on the Indian side of the Indo-Burma border.

(*iv*) A time-table of the East Indian railways.

(*v*) A map of the Ambala Cantonment.

(*vi*) A map of the Poona Cantonment.

(*vii*) Philips' Map of War in the Far-East.

(8) He also collected political literature.

(*i*) India Fights for Freedom.
(by Sardul Singh Caveeshar).

(*ii*) Jagat Palta (The World Revolution) in Gurmukhi.

(*iii*) Agrarian Crisis in India.

(*iv*) Labour Movement in India.

(*v*) Modern Imperialism in India.

(*vi*) National Movement in India.

(*vii*) Gandhi Jainti Satyagraha Programme—bulletin in English.

(*viii*) Release National Leaders—a bulletin.

(*ix*) Azadi Ki Taraf Age Bharo (Advance towards freedom)—A cyclostyled pamphlet in Urdu.

He later confirmed that, besides these records, he had destroyed some compromising material collected by him during his underground activities. He stated that he had spent all he had in cash on travels and his board and lodging at various places. A scrutiny of the Attendance Register of Sewadars of the Gurdwara produced by its Secretary, Partab Singh alias Kartar Singh, showed Ajaib Singh's name as "Giani Amar Singh".

I deputed the Sub-Inspector to search Ajaib Singh's house in village Kallah and that of the Giani in Taran Taaran for firearms, wireless-sets and any other articles belonging to Ajaib Singh. He later informed me that he had first scoured Ajaib Singh's house from celler to garret and found nothing of any significance whatsoever beyond some pictures of certain political leaders panelled on its inner walls. He had also searched the Giani's house from basement to attic but, except for a wrist-watch produced by the Giani as belonging to Ajaib Singh, nothing of interest was recovered. He had also checked it with the local Police ; they had nothing on either of them.

We did not tarry at this sensitive spot. Any leakage of his arrest would have set up a howl. People would have milled around and a crowd grown by the minute like a swarm of angry bees. So far, nobody in the locality knew what had happened nor anything about our invisible presence. Nobody knew that somebody had been leading a double life inside the gurdwara, a place least susceptible of police interference which, as such, provided an utmost anonymity and freedom. He lived in the gurdwara as a Giani with a complete protective colouring so that

nobody looked at him twice. Therefore, we whisked him off quickly and sprinted back to the tongas quietly before the word could get around. All this was of a piece with the secrecy of my mission.

The spy first limped along with a kink and twinge of pain but swayed and staggered on his injured feet. He now shuffled labouriously forward with the help of his right hand on the shoulder of a Constable. All the same, he could not stay this course much longer. His knees buckled under him. One of his legs seemed to have gone bad. The Constable could not steady him any further. He had, therefore, to run between his legs and trip him up to the road. We crammed him into one of the tongas. He sat bewildered, nursing his injuries. I too went a bit limp with blood pulsing in my temples. However, I managed to stagger to the roadside. Blood oozed and squirted from our injuries on to the road. Whatever our condition, it was no time or place to look up a doctor.

The season was a most punishing high summer. Everyone of us was sweltering profusely in the steaming and stewing atmosphere. The reek of perspiration was awful. We were parched with thirst and short of breath from exhaustion and constriction. We paused briefly at the roadside just to catch our breath. This was perhaps the worst sweated adventure I had ever had in the unbearable dog-days of July and August. But then I had the best ever out of the worst ever.

The Giani trailed behind like a lost soul. When he came up, he tried to exchange winks with Ajaib Singh. But in reply, Ajiab Singh, with tears of rage in his eyes, gritted his teeth, scowled at him, rasping out:

> "You, good Giani, it is you? Positively and absolutely that was not Ismail. His pose was false."

This retort totally dispelled my doubt that Ajaib Singh had had any hunch about my pose as Ismail at any time before his round up. I now discovered for myself that there was nothing to my fears about my suspected identity. Ajaib Singh was so sullen with the Giani as if he would draw a sword on him. He was inclined to have a little argument with him but I waved him to strict silence.

The spy and I exchanged recognition glances. He was a 30ish youngman in trim with a spark of vigour in him. He was personable and athletic, amazingly youthful and spry, well set-up and soldierly, sturdy and fleshy, possessing substantial physique and a vigorous glowing health of a prize fighter. He was more big than tall with a quick and spring step, a bundle of energy,

packing a mighty wallop into his voluminous body and a bull-dog jaw. He was heavily bearded and grew stubble whiskers which marked him from other Sikhs. His droopy mustache and scraggy beard as a result of the encounter detracted nothing from his formidable face. He wore khaki shorts, a white shirt and a turban to match.

The spy looked very much older than his photo. "Never believe a photograph", they say; "Everyday one's photo keeps getting younger". The photo fitted his description we had already had of him but not with his latest self. This was because he appeared to have considerably changed in facial expression. I had a particularly close-up view of him to verify his identity. I insisted that in spite of the difference between what he now looked and his photo he was Ajaib Singh and he was. The Giani identified him absolutely, assuring that this was he. It was only now that Ajaib Singh found himself face to face with a fresh face. For me too, this was the first time that I had seen him in the flesh.

The Giani stood there getting his breath, flustered with alarm. Ajaib Singh's arrest threw him into paroxysms of terror and spasms of a sweating fear and a horrifying suspense. He stood aside looking lost and uneasy, visibly on edge, absolutely speechless with breathless anxiety and bewilderment. He had his heart in his mouth, a lump in his throat and moisture in his eyes. He nervously twiddled his thumbs, snapped his fingers and knawed and wrung his hands for all that he had done. His face fell and it put him out of countenance as if his heart was beating in his throat, making him feel ashamed of his "trickery" and "treachery". His forehead streaked with sweat and he mopped it very often. With his eyes down-cast, he stood frozen into a rigid immobility as impassive as a stone. He showed a little life when he slinked into a corner, again stood in consternation, stupefied and petrified with fright, scared stiff, a staggering picture, gasping in amazement, looking at me and my ghost "deshbhagats" in wonderment and horror. He was scared out of his wits, utterly dazed and fazed at the unsettling situation. He was tense, transfixed with sudden surprise. He quailed before the sight and went visibly pale into a stupor of deadly silence, glistening with perspiration, shivering to pieces from heel to head like a falling leaf in stormy weather. The incident seemed to have taken the steam out of him. He was now ashen, a colourless picture of utter dejection. His erstwhile smile and snigger had gone. He got cold feet and went to pieces completely. Cutting a pathetic figure, his throat constricted and his tongue flicked nervously over his lips. A look of blank dismay, he fidgeted uneasily in a frigid atmosphere in the midst of tropical summer. Fear had contorted his face completely.

Why all this scare and despair in the Giani? He was obsessed by a two-fold crucifying dilemma. Firstly, he was responsible for the arrest of his pupil, a brethren of his community to which he seemed to be deeply devoted. He was a considerable figure among his community. Besides, this was the time when communal frenzy was almost endemic in India. Secondly, he saw the writing on the wall for himself for having harboured an enemy agent. This being so, he was looking for a face-saving escape from Ajaib Singh on the one hand and from the Government on the other. How to reconcile the incompatible on two conflicting fronts?

His voice dimmed and diminished all too often. Brimful with desperate tears, he dabbed his handkerchief to his eyes, gave Ajaib Singh an impulsive embrace and kissed him a sad goodbye with his valeditory remarks:—

"I am sorry to see you go."

It seemed as if he was expressing tearful regrets at what he had done to his ward. Tears answered tears. They looked at each other with feeling and, if left to themselves, would have sunk one into the other's arms. But then Ajaib Singh pinched his beard, smoothed his shaggy moustach and ruefully gibed:

"Keep me in your good memory"!

This was a wounding remark made in parting. But he soon returned the Giani's tears by smothered sobs, imploring "Give my regards to my mother".

It was a tearful scene to behold, a moment to remember—the teacher and his taught touchingly half-blind from tears. It could not be natural for either of them not to be tearful. There is a great gap between seeing and feeling. Triumph and tragedy seemed touchable by the split-second.

The Giani now turned to me pleadingly and, with his head in his hands, wept real tears. He grabbed my shoulder with begging eyes and, sobbing into his handkerchief, supplicated me in breathless horror to help him out of the predicament. He made frantic entreaties, swallowed twice in expressing contrition for any implicit or explicit impropriety involved in our dealings over the issue.

"Excuse me now that I have done your bidding", he implored. He also requested that it should never get out that it was he who had tipped me off. Since this was not the time to enter into any polemics, I gave him a victor's smile, enquiring:

"You lingered a bit longer at the gurdwara; what was the matter?"

He excused himself saying "A Sikh congregation was at devotions in the gurdwara and raised eye-brows in disapproval of my interruption. Ajaib Singh was busy saying his rosary. However, in spite of this, I brought him to the tree in a mere fifteen minutes".

> "Yes, you came soon, though not soon enough. However, you stand excused as far as his arrest is concerned."

I allowed the Giani to go back home, darkly hinting he might be arrested too. I told him in parting:

> "Soon enough we will meet again. Till then goodbye."

Giani: Yes, adieu.

He genuflected, gave trembling thanks to me and left with drooped spirits, slowly and sadly. But very soon he darted away and was gone in a trice. He dropped from sight in a canter as if fleeing from flames. He must have been mildly disappointed not to have been arrested along with the spy! It was urgently necessary to haul him up as a harbourer but I was looking forward to using him as an independent witness in this case. This could be done later. The immediate need of the hour was to start home, make the best of our way off and reach Lahore with the spy as quickly as possible.

We were some minutes at this place. It was growing towards dusk. We looked our last on the place and made a quick and quiet get away. To my surprise, I saw the Giani re-appear from behind a clump of foliage of a roadside tree and waving after us as we slid away into the dim distance. Ajaib Singh, too, waved his hands in farewell. The Giani watched us out of sight.

We got past the Sangrana Sahib Railway Station on the road home. The gurdwara and the railway station were still visible in the distance when Ajaib Singh gave a sudden yell of terror, as if bidding his last adieu to his familiar environments. "Don't be silly" said one of the escort loftily. I admonished silence to both of them. The fear of his possible shouting had throughout been knawing at us. He did it at last but luckily for the first and last time. Another ten minutes and the distance behind us became dusky and dark. "Can you go any faster"? I urged the driver.

We travelled a good five miles, reaching Amritsar about half an hour after sunset. The tongaman failed to light up in the evening and drove fast right through a stoplight in the city traffic, feeling we were Police in a hurry. We skirted the bazaars full of swirling crowds. Scruffy cops on traffic duty shrilled their whistles at speeding vehicles. We got to the railway station in plenty of time to catch the last connection home. The trains and

buses were excellently tabulated. Our train was on time. The platform was inconveniently crowded. We found a queue in front of the entrance to our compartment. The Police travelled on every train. Assisted by them, we jumped the queue to get into the train quickly. The journey home with the spy in our catch was a sheer delight. We kept the spy contained. He seemed frightened enough to bear the journey. He did not stir and accompanied us impassively. We reached Lahore at 8 p.m. As telephoned ahead, a Police Guard and a car were waiting for us at the station.

I entered the Fort triumphantly with a beaten enemy agent as my trophy. He was locked up in one of the cells, away from Mr. Jai Parakash Narain, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. Rama Nandan Misra and other political detenus under my interrogation. As a first aid, we tended to his wounds and dabbed ointment on them. I soon got a doctor to the Fort to examine him and myself. Some of his wounds, which were still wet and glistening, reeked of infection. One of my injuries, too, did not respond to treatment and remained under a blood-soaked bandage for some time. Our pains smarted without abatemant for quite a few days.

I got to a phone and called the D. I. G.'s residence. He was not in. I just dropped from exhaustion, unable to go another step. I had been through the grind. I was tired and wan but happy. Hunger was the best sauce. I had a big meal and a good night's sleep like a top.

Everybody rose to a surprise the following morning. Refreshed mentally and physically, I informed the D. I. G. at his office that I had nailed the man and got him right here. He said he would be over in ten minutes. The notoriously elusive spy had to be seen to be believed. So the D. I. G. came to find that the news, though incredible, was true. He was thrilled and overwhelmed. The success set him wistfully smiling broadly all over his face. He congratulated me heartily on "doing a magnificent job" of rounding up the redoubtable spy who had been on the run for a long time, operating underground all the time. He expressed extremely rewarding words:—

> "He has shown his class and cut the Gordian knot. No tributes could be too generous. He has outblazed the earlier surface-skimmers. Nobody did the job he did and did it too well, with great dispatch and dedication. It is a dazzling sweep in contrast to the previous fumbling efforts and dismal failures. He has succeeded more than most. He started last but moved fast. This is one of his several brilliant firsts, a mighty shot and a quick and slick sprint to proud victory. He has done it in a

canter and telescoped the work of several months into just a few days with his ruthless efficiency. He got into the spirit of the problem in his top form and hooked the spy in his novel way of angling. He showed a daring dash of a deshbhagat, a cold-blooded courage of a tremendous heart beyond the ordinary run of duty. The dramatic arrest made by him has vindicated the police emphatically".

The S. P. (Security), who had gone to Delhi and returned a day later, expressed his personal gratitude. He took a brief transcription of my experience, covering about 12 pages recounting the salient features of the capture and sent it to the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India. I clearly remember the opening paragraph saying, *inter alia*, "A very excellent work has been done with impeccable execution by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain of the Punjab C. I. D. . . . . . ".

Messages blared and signals beamed to notify the district agencies the arrest of this elusive man. Various officers, who came to the Fort, received the unqualified success as a healthy shock. The arrest carried a great glamour. It drew raves and brought gasps of wonder from them. They rose to me, cheered me in the midst of a tiresome chore and commended without reservation that this was an excellent catch and that I could take a legitimate pride in the feat. The convulsion of delirious hilarity was too much to conceal. The place hummed with a buzz of activity. My colleagues gave me a big hand and cheered me with all their lungs. The most chummy among them burst into Homeric laughter. Except for some of the previous fumblers and runners up and rival compeers and colleagues, who were green with envy and gave me a grudging admiration, everybody seemed radiantly happy, tingling with what they considered heroic and legendary. Congratulatory letters poured in by the bagful. All in all, the sweet smell of success in a hard case, which had defied solution for long, wafted all over the place.

The most inquisitive among my colleagues were interested to know the extent to which I had got my first nibble from Ismail. The answer could be neither "Yes" nor "No". What Ismail had told me had done me one thing: it catapulated me into Taran Taaran at a time when my job in the Fort was too busy to allow me to go after a man on the run far too long. The tip given by Ismail was that Ajaib Singh was in hiding through a Giani residing near the house of Kotwal of Taran Taaran. No Giani was found to be living or to have ever lived far or near the Kotwal's house. Besides, the word "Giani" was a bare courtesy title without a name. The guess how I correlated this cryptic title with the information previously collected by me in my own

way about the identity and schooling of Ajaib Singh is now the reader's privilege. And then there were three teachers known by this title. How I had a dig at it and how I ultimately wormed my way to the right one among them and made him to disgorge the spy is history. Ismail did his bit; why belittle his little? There is always a difference between a little and little, between nothing and something, however, little that something may be. Ismail put me on a tiny track which got lost only to radiate the bow in the cloud and bring the man to earth. No clear clue broke the case. A tiny tip, many a trip and brinkmanship did it.

This was the end of the chase but not the end of the job. Formal investigation, collection of evidence and prosecution in a case choking with loose ends were among the most essential pre-requisites to secure the critical climax of conviction.

As a first step, I registered case F. I. R. No. 208/1943 under section 3 of the Enemy Agents Ordinance, Rule 38 of the Defence of India Rules and Sections 120-B and 121-A of the Indian Penal Code at Police Station Old Anarkali, Lahore, in respect of acts of espionage committed by Ajaib Singh and other enemy agents alleged to have been operating in the Punjab. The investigation was spread over a large area with its ramifications in the Punjab, Assam and other provinces and places in India.

The Giani wrote me a doleful letter requesting for a reprieve from his foolhardy excursion into tricky premises entirely foreign to his simple profession. It was a prodigious letter, reassuring me that he had never meant what his words in the exchanges had purported to do and that he simply could not see why what he would state with all humility and sincerity should not be believed. But it was not unexpected of a timid teacher that he was not as promising as his pen and that a considerable spade work would have to be done to cultivate and convert him into a courageous teller of the truth.

VII.—THE HARBOURER POSES A PROBLEM

What to do with the Giani ? Was he an accomplice, a harbourer or an accessory after the fact ? Should he be arrested if he was one or the other ? What was the nature and extent of his complicity with the spy and his mission ? What overt and covert acts had he committed or omitted in collusion with the spy in the furtherance of his mission ?

Answers to these questions were dependent on the availability of relevant evidence. Many summit and minisummit meetings were held between the investigating and prosecuting agencies to discuss the rights and wrongs of the case in all its bearing. We held many forensic discussions, sat long and late, hashing out how to take a firm decision in a slippery case.

The arrest of the spy and the alleged culpability of the Giani led to an emergency session. I went over the case with them, running down the facts quickly and explaining the situation succinctly, giving a lurid account of the high spots, the stark outlines and a blue-print with all the crisp details. I told them that I had heard evidence from Ismail and Ajaib Singh, that Ismail had made a confession from first-hand knowledge and that some additional data had also been uncovered.

We entered upon a lengthy disquisition and made a surgical analysis of all the aspects of the case for three straight hours. Cautiously, we sifted through whatever evidence had been garnered, lining up every available bit. The Giani loomed large in the discussion. We did collective thinking and debated and deliberated exhaustively how to deal with him. Opinions varied widely. Arguments raged back and forth. All the legal mechanisms were examined and an inventory taken of what had happened. The main problem was how to work up the available evidence that could stand up in a court of law. It was felt that, the facts and circumstances being what they were, no law covered the situation precisely. As would be presently seen, in view of the controversial and critical implicatians, we were chary of making hard decisions for quite some time. The task was so urgent and serious that we couldn't afford to get it wrong. It was an exceedingly complex case, indeed. It had such pros and cons that it was impossible not to have mixed feelings about its final fate.

Some of the prosecutors unanimously advised the arrest of the Giani. This was a kittle point in a touchy and ticklish case

which was sufficiently important to warrant the least risk. I looked askance at the suggestion. I saw it differently and made no bones to passionately oppose it. I did not believe in official coyness in admitting or advocating the correct position. I spelled out my reasons in detail. In my view, the over-riding question was whether the Giani would depose for the prosecution and, if he would, we would be ill-advised to arrest him. I told them that the Giani would be the chief, in fact the only, witness for the prosecution against the spy and that his arrest would give the defence just the argument they would be looking for. I testified from experience that his arrest would be an irrevocable blunder which would turn him down cold against the prosecution and that this would be as bad as letting important evidence slip through our fingers. I made it clear that now he was in hell of a hot spot and, as such, would be easily malleable. In the circumstances, I advised them to keep him hot and to go soft on him as otherwise any deposition made by him during the course of detention or even after his release would be considered as made under duress by a planted witness. I warned them not to do anything that could be calculated, even remotely, to coaxing or heckling him into making a forced statement. A statement by a witness should be invariably made voluntarily and never obtained by earnest solicitations, killing intimidations or ruthless extortions. Tainted evidence cannot be made better in quality by being added in quantity.

It was counter-argued that even assuming that he agreed to become a witness to evade his arrest, his consent would be dictated by fear or force and that he would withdraw at the first available opportunity in order to avoid blaming Ajaib Singh's fate on his own foibles. I did not see it that way. Firstly, the argument was hypothetical. Unless he was actually arrested, any argument that he would be considered to have made a statement under any supposed pressure or force or fear of arrest won't stick. Secondly, there would be nothing to stop him from withdrawing his statement even if one were made by him during or after his arrest. Thirdly, any statement made during or after arrest would not be worth a sou even if he were to stand by it in court.

But why arrest him at all ? Could he be prosecuted as an accomplice of the spy, the principal ? No, there was no evidence. Moreover, no factual or moral justification was forthcoming. Could he be prosecuted for harbouring the spy ? No, no evidence was available on this count either. Could he be prosecuted as an accessory after the fact ? Yes, he was either an accessory after the fact or principal in the second degree in that he had aided and abetted espionage by the actual perpetrator during

the period it was committed by him. But this was based on his own admission before a Police Officer. There was not even a scrap of evidence beyond what he himself might or might not choose to say in court. He would, to be sure, choose one thing, a vehement denial. One's own blood and skin are thicker than truth, whatever its density or dynamism.

Could the Giani be as good as an approver ? No. Firstly, the question presupposes he was an accomplice which he was not and, as such, he could not depose from any first-hand knowledge. Secondly, his deposition on the spy's extra-judicial confession would not cover the whole case of espionage beyond what the confessor had confided in him about himself alone. Thirdly, the prosecution would be ill-advised to have too many approvers around, touching only individuals in the face of the comprehensive statement made by Ismail as an approver for the case as a whole.

The matter did not end. The discussion was all cavil or controversy. It continued in a whirl, at times in distaste. It developed into an encounter session where we criticised each other, saying what was hard to say. We gave one another difficult time, chewing over our side of the argument time and again. A morass of conflicting points of view ensued. Faith and unfaith were pitted against each other. Some of the participants doubted or derided my stand. One of the prosecutors advised that the case had little inherent strength, that it had quite a few gaping leaks and that unless they were plugged up first, it simply won't jell. Another officer claimed that unless he was arrested, the Giani, being a staunch Sikh, won't agree to testify, much less actually testify, against his pupil and a co-religionist in a serious case as this. Still another disagreed with something which never existed! Whatever their reason or unreason, all of them agreed to disagree with me. The perennial question that nagged everyone was whether the Giani would play. This was the main gaping leak, too ticklish an issue to be downgraded.

The case had really had multiple difficulties. It was pretty well mixed up and, as such, not easily susceptible of proof. Evidence was admittedly scant. The available stuff hardly made even a mole of a case. I insisted that the plea of paucity of sufficient evidence and absence of outside corroboration was all the more reason that the prosecution could not do without the spicy testimony of the Giani as an independent witness. We must play him for all he was worth. As against this, it was argued that no facts would be available to back up his statement and that all that was available as supporting evidence was nothing but a shadow of the shade. To this I sharply disagreed and held

tenaciously that the oral statement made by him had been checked with the disclosures made by Ismail and found to contain grisly details which gave added force to his testimony. I argued that a case of espionage is seldom sufficiently documented and that it is rare to have a preponderence of evidence, but that if the Giani stood by what he had told me in my role as a deshbhagat, we had had enough on the spy and that no court would turn him loose in such a mathematical case. I pointed out that their subjective approach was not supported by any objective facts. They heard me again sum the case up. I expounded to them my reasons and made mincemeat of what they said, quoting, as I did, chapter and verse of brasstacks over again. They were interested to know how my thinking had worked out. As I leafed through the file, explaining point by point, some of the dissidents glanced at each other significantly.

There were still too many nods and gloomy predictions around the table, all against my suggestion not to arrest the Giani. You can't tutor truth to a teacher by torture. I was alone in that opinion. Some were sceptical of, and some even hostile to, my view. But I stood my ground and claimed with pre-science that the Giani's deposition without duress would surely tip the scales. I was fairly well convinced that I could not be too wrong. It was a very intriguing situation. The more they disagreed with me the more I felt I was right ! My prime emphasis all the time was on the use that we could make of the Giani in a thin case for the prosecution.

I warned them that we should not bury our heads in the sand, for I had the full measure of the Giani and rated him very high. I told them that he was super-bright, incredibly virile and vigilant, full of uncanny skill, capable of making eloquent pleas, very sharp, infinitely shrewd and personable, with peery eyes, a clear head and a good eye to read and rate everybody and that no one could ever get even a word from him in edgeways. A man with a high intelligence quotient, he was so calculating that he could correct a computer. I further told them that he had many other talents, that he was simple and sensible, very strict and austere with himself, a good sort, poor in money but rich in character, all virtue, the truest of the true, as honest as his face and his teaching profession. He would rather die than lie and state everything with brutal candour and ruthless honesty. Therefore, I informed them that my most baffling and bitter experience of the man was that he was uncompromisingly honest and enormously pious, as moral as the Vicar of Wakefield, always playing square and speaking so earnestly that it was well-nigh impossible to get any tortuous deal out of him by influence

or inducement. He was hampered by too much of virtue and innocence. His mercurial behaviour towards me at his house and the railway station had been inspired by Ajaib Singh and in no way showed the real man in him. He was, at worst, an honest counterfeiter for a pupil with a common faith. One could see with half an eye that he was as good a Giani as any could be, a man of goodness and godliness, of few smiles and few friends,

The Giani was not a bare name but every bit a character, an exception to the uncanny character quoted in a certain English daily recently :—

> "I was brought up in a clergyman's household, so I am a first class liar"—Dame Sybil Thomdike."

By and large, what worried me most was that the Giani was sternly Sikh, aggressively religious, militantly emotional, a downright man who had such a deep and abiding interest in his community that, unless he was morally convinced to the marrow of his bones that he was in bad company, it would not be possible to wean him from Ajaib Singh to the extent of expecting him to depose true facts in court against him by coercion, particularly when they were fraternity brothers. I argued that the only way to win his confidence for the prosecution was to convince him of his misguided and misplaced sympathies with the wrong person under some wrong notion and that this was fraught with dire consequences. But it required Antony's eloquence to tame a tough and truthful teacher and bring him round to rip up the very roots he had himself planted. His would be a most devastating deposition against the accused as all his disadvantages of fanaticism and fraternity would go to the advantages of the prosecution if only he agreed to stand by it. The best of testimony is the one which comes from the other camp. The point that I tried to make was that we must play the game by the rules as any conversion under coercion or detention would be tantamount to spanning the bow too far to stand the test of time or communal prejudices and pressures and that unless the Giani's deposition in or out of court was voluntary, it would vitiate the proceedings and detract from its value. No case could be won by perjured evidence. Therefore, I advised them not to do anything to discredit or disconcert an indispensable witness.

My reasons commended themselves to some of the participants as having had a staying power, validity and vitality. In fact, if experience is any guide, a brainwash done without brinkmanship brings better and more durable and dependable results. We invariably brain-washed detenus in the Fort by the very simple

process of kindness and good food. Racked by loneliness, some of them pined for homes and lovingly called their children. Politeness and diplomacy got us all the truth out of them. Persuasion with genuine kindness free from all kinds of pressure, however legal and justifiable it may be, always pays in eliciting truth. "Even a horse", goes a saying "does not give of its best when it is whipped, let alone a human being".

I was secure in the knowledge that once the Giani said "yes" to depose for the prosecution, he would never say "no". Those who chose to disagree continued to contend that "all this won't stand up to make a conviction". The die-hard dissidents felt secure in the belief that it is always safe to be pessimistic because after all if the pessimist turns out to be wrong, no one blames him. The cautious never err. As observed by a learned jurist, there are two ways of escaping responsibility in a case : either believing everything or doubting everything. Most of my colleagues chose the latter as the better of the two.

"The best way of answering a bad argument is just to let it go on"—Sydney Smith.

I did not abide by this defeatist advice. The best way of answering a bad argument is to argue it out. I accepted the challenge and carried my point. The head of the Department who sat through the arguments warmed to my idea and came alongside me. He smiled approval, adding "have it your way". To the prosecutors he said "we have deliberated his proposal ; it is a brilliant idea, full of reason and realism. We have crossed the Rubicon. His logic is inexorable". On this, nobody importuned me with further arguments.

Though one of the doubting Thomases still kept dis-approving silence, other sceptics and critics, who had throughout spoken at me, fell in and gave their approval on the nod. The tally was now 5 to 2. This was how I talked them over and got my way. The future line of action was now in full focus.

Armed with the mandate of the high-powered committee, I left for Taran Taaran to examine the Giani. I went over his mind in my mind enroute. Earlier, my problem had been as to how to tackle him to get at the spy. The problem now was as to how to bring him round to speak out what the spy had spoken to him in confidence. I had got the spy out of him, playing the role of a deshbhagat. Would I be able to elicit out of him all about the spy in my role as a Police Officer? Whatever my ability or disability might be, I had undertaken before the committee to do

it all. What weighed heavily on my mind were three extremely tough issues :—

(1) Will the Giani agree to disclose all that the spy had confided in him under a bond of secrecy? Difficult.

(2) If he does, will he make a statement before a magistrate under section 164, Cr. P. C.? Perhaps. Perhaps not.

(3) If he does, will he stick to the statement at the trial of the spy? Doubtful.

I went straight to the Giani. He went visibly deathly pale on seeing me. He was in a hanging mood, a cringing mouse under the paw of a cat, intolerably genteel. He rose to me meekly and received me with an embarrassing courtesy and exaggerated civility. Anxious to please me, he put up both hands for me. He was all upset, tense and haggard, deeply distressed and absolutely humbled to the dust, beaten and broken. He was out of spirits, white to the lips, looking wretchedly miserable, waffling and wobbling, hurried and worried. He had not got over his fright yet. He was all the more flushed with embarrassment, excitement and apprehension at seeing me again at his house, no longer as a deshbhagat but, in my true colours, a Police Officer of the Punjab C. I. D. He saw in me a nightmare. He had earlier tried to cast me off even in my role of a deshbhagat but every time I had been back to him like a bad coin. This time it was too much for him to find the same wolf at his door with different spots. He had now no doubt he was through. He was sore afraid, gone all to pieces, shaking from fear, apprehending I had now come for him. He was on fire with excitement. His face fell and went a shade paler. His jaw dropped, looking as if he didn't know whether to laugh or to cry in derision. He looked old and buffeted, an empty shell of his former self, wearing a permanently mourning face. He had visibly lost his previous bite, glamour, health and spirit. I thought back to the scene of his truculence at this very place. The one-time garrulous Giani was a world different now. He was all inverted vanity—humility. The ashes were absolutely cold now. He was no longer brash. He flustered and fidgeted under my gaze and did not even as much as blink. His face was awry, looking grim as if brooding on his mistakes. The penetrating gaze under tenebrous eyebrows was gone. He perspired and wanted solace in this searing time of distress.

He was all grief. A loud and uneasy quiet settled over his face and the entire place. He sat in an agonising silence as if turned to stone. I too sat in tense silence for a moment. Strained and sorrowful silence and counter silence made silence touchingly vocal and intolerable. He was provocatively demure to a fault. It seemed difficult to get him in conversation. How to set the

conversation going again was the problem. When he made an effort to speak, his voice was no longer level. The arrest of Ajaib Singh had proved a crusher for him. He was recoiling from its shock. The episode seemed to have made a mental hit. The previous ironic smile had given place to a solemn face. The apprehension of his own arrest worried him sick, reduced him to a bundle of shaky nerves. His hands opened and shut nervously. He was now a fish out of water, a worried man struggling with himself, spoiling to get over the fright.

I put the ominous lull to good use. I stood at his shoulder and opened the conversation with an icy and devastating politeness. But I got nothing beyond moot replies. My exaggerated politeness disconcerted him all the more. It seemed difficult to break the harrowing gloom weighing down heavily on him. His pleading and terrified face mellowed my feelings. I tried to put him at ease by talking conventional things. I reasoned with him, explaining the seriousness of the situation in which he had placed himself. He had no doubt in his mind that his arrest was a ghastly reality. I was convinced that in spite of his apparent efforts to wear off the shock, keep a brave face and recover self-possession, there was more than craven fear in his silence. He blustered before the spectre of arrest and prosecution. Tears started to his eyes. I smiled to stimulate smile but it was one-sided smile. He failed to force even a semblance of smile. I tried to laugh his tears and morbid fears away as fanciful but his dread persisted. My assurance to make his mind easy and relax his strain gave him cold comfort. He collected himself to say something but his voice trailed off. He struggled again to start a conversation but relapsed into still more silence. Every time he sweated and twitched. At last, he made the break, sobbed out his story in bits, floundering and fumbling with words. He commenced with a constrained voice and a tense face.

Giani : (biting his finger nervously, he now spoke more in sorrow than in anger).

"I feel as if my head has been wrenched from my body. I am not where I am. Words fail me. When the heart is full, the tongue stumbles. Whatever my previous pose, a teacher is at bottom a coward. The shoulders of a teacher are hardly broad enough to bear such a big burden and blame".

I : What transpired between you and Ajaib Singh ever since he returned from abroad ?

Giani : (With a lump in his throat he mumbled disconnected words) what . . . . . Ajaib Singh . . . . . you ?

I : I am not sure I can hear you, though I am straining my hearing.

Giani : Please move up front. I say what has Ajaib Singh told you ?

I : Every bit of all that he had told you.

You have to make a choice between your own interest, the interest of your wife and children, your career and your conduct on the one hand and the interest of Ajaib Singh on the other. Blood is thicker than water. Blood has never been thicker than truth. But then Ajaib Singh is not your blood. You should not allow your sympathies with him to be thicker than truth or thicker than your own blood, your own kith and kin and your own future. You are gambling with your safety and the safety of your family. You never became fearful for yourself and your family when you undertook to harbour a spy. Now your life hangs in the balance. I am afraid you would be the first to take the last road of all. You have been downright foolhardy, the father of your own difficulties. You continue to hurt your own case, rushing into danger with your eyes blind-folded. Your attitude being what it is, you would be the principal casualty of this unfortunate episode. You have worked yourself into a strait jacket and still you are kidding with fire. You need spanking. I would be less than candid if I didn't warn you that this is the type of a case which would cause the bravest heart to quail, a case in which high policy is bound to be tangled up with high politics. It is a supreme offence. You can't just shrug it away. You are in. You are talking of your reputation. It is your life. You have had a close-brush with death.

(This again sent a shiver down his back).

"These are nightmare times full of horrors. A bloody war is on. Even in sedate times nothing could justify your pretensions. It is unfortunate that an intelligent man, as you are, should have committed a colossal folly, a monstrous blunder and a tragic error in harbouring an enemy agent, knowing full well what he was up to. No man in his wits would have done such a thing. It is doubtful you had no glimmering of the seriousness of your action. To assume that you were ignorant of Ajaib Singh's mission would be a poor compliment to your intelligence. It was your duty to know better than you vainly expect me to believe you didn't.

I am not unaware of what is nibbling at you. You are in a jam. But it is time that you applied brakes to your reckless and sneaking sympathy with men of his ilk. I had threatened you as a deshbhagat. I don't want to threaten you now as a

Police Officer. You ought to seriously consider your plight. After all, you are a respectable and law-abiding citizen. You are known to be as fine a man as there is in your community. You are so nice that one feels subdued by your personality and no less by your hospitality. You appear to have harboured Ajaib Singh out of sympathy with him and not out of your apathy, much less enmity, with the powers that be. In my view, you are full of imagination, will and skill. It may be that you did more than you could understand and did it without realizing its gravity. But now that the whole thing has been uncovered, I would advise you to quit your irresolute behaviour and speak out whatever Ajaib Singh had confided in you about his mission in India. Your statement must equate with the facts. You should tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth in your own interest, or anything that you keep back or say which is not true will be at your own risk. I am not your hangman nor your moral mentor. I am not your enemy. But please remember that I am not your friend either. It is for you to make a choice between an option and a pose, between good and bad, between truth and Ajaib Singh—

I take my text from the Granth Sahib where Guru Nanak Dev says :—

"Mande Kammin Nanaka Jad Kad Manda Ho".

(The fruit of evil is invariably evil).

Giani : (flustered at finding himself catapulated into the spyring. With tears in his eyes, he cried on me piteously).

I am not shy of the truth. I know Ajaib Singh only in a professional way. I didn't see anything unusual in his conduct and you shouldn't think worse of it. I have been waiting for my arrest to come any moment, feeling as I do that you are making too much of nothing more than a mere suspicion.

(The dog sat erect before us, his tongue hanging out, panting in loud gasps. as if scanning the situation anxiously).

I : (I again tried to talk him out of his horror. He was now articulate but not pliable. He was too full of fears and tears to tell the truth).

As a Police Officer, I have throughout tried to address you in civil tones. But I feel constrained to tell you roundly: that verily is an atrocious lie dished out by a most phenomenal liar. Tears are no argument. A tearful crocodile has never been believed. I have

fully investigated you. We have evidence that you have been more than casually acquainted with Ajaib Singh. You say the opposite to what Ajaib Singh says. You are in his mission just as deep.

Giani : I, in the mission ?

I : Yes, in the mission up to your ears, all the way ever since he landed. It is why you are stubborn to my repeated advice asking you to tell all about the unorthodox alliance between you and the spy, the teacher and the taught. Why put up pleas which are pure cant and casuistry? You have told me next to nothing. What you say is a hell of a lie. Your denial is less than honest. It is worse than the crime alleged to have been committed by you.

I alert you to danger. You harboured the man knowing his mission. It is time you recanted your lies and admitted that you had cried wolf. Your denial simply compounds your crime still further. Your part is as criminal as that of the real culprit. The spy was in counsel with you all this time. You can be hauled up as an accessory after the fact, aiding and abetting a fugitive from justice, an active spy, thereby compounding his high treason. You can be tossed into jail to meet a needless death. Would you risk your neck for a criminal? You are going to pay for your involvement in a nasty mess in blood and tears.

You made classic mistakes and you still seem to be thick about what I say to you regarding your injudicious protection to an enemy agent. Why this rumbling and grumbling now? Why these tears? Why murmur and repine after you yourself chose the wrong way? The blame rests with you. Your folly is too tragic for tears. Your worry is self-inflicted. You can't escape reality by denying it. I am trying to retrieve you as I feel it is no use casting blame to one another. There has already been much angry talk and indignation mixed with bitterness between us. There is not a shred of possibility to help you. I can't extricate you from the predicament unless you believe me and tell the truth quickly.

You seek out a lawyer if you will and he will tell you how serious is your involvement in this case. Besides being a Police Officer, I come from a legal family. It beats me how you can edge out of it. It is odd that a Giani should have made the fatal error of first harbour-

ing a spy in bland defiance of the law of the land and then gone ultra defensive by suppressing all about him. You still live in the dreamland of good old days, never realizing that you owed it to yourself and to the authorities to notify the police immediately what Ajaib Singh had told you about his mission. You are the villain of the sorry situation, a man with a fumbling mind, espousing a wrong side. Was it brave of you, foolish of you or clever of you that you got mixed with such things and cut a wide swath, ruining yourself ? The gravity of the situation is evident enough to make the pulse of even a dare-devil pound feverishly.

To quote the law on the point. Section 44 of the Indian Code of Criminal Procedure says that every person . . . aware of the commission of, or of the intention of any other person to commit, any offence punishable, among others, under sections 121 and 121-A of the Indian Penal Code (as applicable to cases of espionage, criminal conspiracy against the British Indian Government) shall, in the absence of a reasonable excuse, the proving of which shall lie upon the person so aware, forthwith give information to the nearest magistrate or police officer of such commission or intention.

Explanation to section 107 of the Indian Penal Code, as applied to your case, says that you abetted the offence of espionage by . . . wilful concealment of the material fact of Ajaib Singh's mission. You were bound by law to disclose the mission but, on the contrary, you procured a hiding place and also gave financial assistance to the man, thereby facilitating the fulfilment of the mission. You aided the commission of the offence by your non-interference where it was your duty to interfere by (*i*) dissuading him from the treasonable course he had undertaken and (*ii*) reporting the matter to the authorities.

Section 120 I. P. C. refers to the concealment of design to facilitate the commission of an offence by any act or illegal omission or by making any representation which one knows to be false in respect of the design.

Section 201 I.P.C. reads: Whoever, knowing or having reason to believe that an offence has been committed, causes any evidence of the commission of that offence to disappear, with the intention of screening the offender from legal punishment or with that intention gives any information respecting the offence which he

knows or believes to be false, shall, if the offence, which he knows or believes to have been committed, is punishable with death, be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years. . . . . .

Section 202 I.P.C. reads: Whoever, knowing or having reason to believe that an offence has been committed, intentionally omits to give any information respecting that offence which he is legally bound to give, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months or with fine or with both.

You have been good at evil. You have so far helped an outlaw. Now you should help the law. Let us get this straight and tell me the absolute truth or you shall have to live with the consequences and scramble for your own life. I have no doubt that there is a lot between you and the spy. You have run an infinite risk of death. This is your third worse. The first worse was at the railway station and the second at your house last. It is time you kept your distance and played no angles to spring the guy. I say it is still time to benefit from the hindsight, avoid the obvious and get down to brass-tacks and do it now, failing which you would be your own executioner. What I say is all to your good. I have throughout more pity than anger for you and desire actively to support you. But for my respect for the teaching profession, you should have been clamped into jail. Only I stand between you and the jail and between your life and sure death. Why make a dash for death ?

Giani : (paled and licked his lips woefully).

Espionage? I ? The reverse would be true. It is God's truth that espionage is out of my line. I am not that kind. I am beyond such a job. It is beyond the wit of a teacher to dabble in espionage. The truth will sort itself out in the fulness of time. I am innocent. I have done nothing to give me a guilty conscience. It was the circumstances that forced me into a sordid situation beyond my ken and control. I was innocently mistaken to have done it at Ajaib Singh's urging. I knew little and understood less. His father is newly dead. When he approached me for a shelter. I could not refuse. He was a drifter without a steady job. I took compassion on him as would a teacher on his taught in trouble. A teacher is gullible beyond belief

to a glib story. Besides, he has a good breed and, though penniless, he declined my offer to board him free. I did it from old habit. He is now gone from me two months.

The ilaqa bristles with a big breed of criminals and hideouts of outlaws. This is not an isolated case. Scores occur across the country daily. Are there no laws for outlaws? I have seldom seen a harbourer come to trouble. Law dreads dare-devils. Law punishes only those who abide by law ! I have never consorted with criminals. I have no criminal acquaintances. I gave Ajaib Singh shelter not because of his being a spy but because of his having been my old student. He needed to be helped himself. Even if I did it, as alleged, I assure you I did it for the first time ever. I emphatically deny to have had anything to do with it in the field. Though I knew he was on a mission. I just shrugged it off as futile and foolish. Why should a teacher bother his tiny head on unproductive ventures without any aim or gain? The spy was none of my choosing. He came with the wind and I just blew him off to another place. He went to Gurdwara Sangrana Sahib on his own. I never stood his guarantee. I should not be hauled up for a vicarious liability. If anything, I incensed the nemesis of the laissez-faire. I need your sympathy and commiseration. Please clear my name of the alleged smear.

I : Would you put yourself at the disposal of every crazy fool and every imbecile who happens to come your way ? You would not have done all that you did for Ajaib Singh unless you were privy to his dark designs. Now you recoil at my advice to tell all you did for him and all that you know about him.

Giani : (asked defensively).

How was I to know Ajaib Singh was on a mission? I was so pre-occupied with my immediate troubles and mundane chores that all foresight had forsaken me. All that you say slugs me under the heart when I conjure up before my mind the allegation of my involvement in a serious case as this. I am well into old age, keeping indifferent health. I had lately turned the corner when you appeared on the scene. I am in deep trouble and torment ever since I returned from Gurdwara Sangrana Sahib. I took vacation but have had no peace of mind. I am still on vacation. I remain cooped up in my house. The horror of being involved in this case

is mounting up. I shall never recover from the shock I have had. I am in mortal distress. I am out of heart and my nerves are on edge. Sleep has left me. The deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night. I have not the heart. I am dead inside. I wish to resign and withdraw into private life.

I am dead for the second time today, the first being the day Ajaib Singh was arrested. Please don't flog the doubly dead beyond endure. What happens twice happens a third time. How I hope to Gad I was dead for the last time. I am in such a dire agony that quick death would be merciful.

I : You played traitor to the national cause on being approached by me as a deshbhagat in the first instance. You are a traitor now by the law of the land. All this is tantamount to treacherous politics, unbecoming of a stimulating teacher.

Giani : (touched to the quick, he cried :)

Fie on everybody castigating teachers traitors. A teacher has a soldierly disdain for politics. It is beyond his wit to play politics in disguise. He has no time or taste for treacherous and tortuous politics, an imbecile business, a slippery trade without rules, a dirty and squalid pastime and a costly and corrrupt luxury of the unemployed rich. He stays clear of such polluted politics and fire-eating politicians. There is an extremely thin line between politics and corruption. Politics and power, like corruption, once taken are never forsaken ; the more the people have them the more they want them. Politics is complex and volatile. It is not unoften that politics succumb to political immorality and political prostitution. It is a particularly absorbing occupation. As against this, a teacher belongs to a different outfit. He is unfit for the rough and tumble of politics, a struggle between opposites. He has two strikes against him for political work : poverty and sedentry profession. He is grossly underpaid. He can never be indecently rich. He is a man of straw, too poor to say or do anything clever. He has more rags than riches. He just scratches a living from his profession. He is never reasonably well off. He has too paltry a pay and too petty a position to rub shoulders with inflated phaoras. Money and fame are strangers to him. His enduring weakness is his tendency to withdraw into himself. He has no flair for fanfare. He is coldly professional, a prisoner of

his job, living in cool detachment, incommunicado, entirely within himself, a laborious, feckless and sedately threadbare life of abstinence and stunning simplicity inconspicuously. His world ends with himself. He labours under high pressure and constant tension at the edge of exhaustion. He is a teetotaller, living puritanically, privately and unpolitically.

("Politics is a dirty game for dirty people and a clean game for clean people"—Quaid-e-Azam).

("Those who shun politics get persons worse than themselves to rule them"—Winston Churchill).

I : Present-day life is all politics. All topics lead to politics as all religions lead to God. Teachers have politics. Students have politics. The politics of the teachers and the taught have, however, nothing in common with the polluted politics of certain crooks who peck at everything and pick up and pocket every bit to which they take fancy. A professional politician, as distinct from a student politician, is a person who can talk in circles while standing square'.

Giani : I agree, we have academic politics. We have economic problems.

A teacher is a homeless coot, a good man in bad business, at best a static business, always staying on the sidelineswith no stakes outside his teaching drudgery. Once a teacher, always a teacher. If any body among the public services, it is a teacher who makes his living by being passionately honest with impeccable standards of integrity without any astronomical figure of income. Every teacher turns an honest penny. His salary is his only stand by. He teetors on the edge of bankruptcy. He has to hustle for every single penny. Schoolmastering is never fattening. You will never find a teacher with a bulging bank balance or a big belly. His life is painful and pitiful. You should wonder how in the world does a teacher make a go of things at all. Teaching is a cowardly profession. It promises no future or fortune except that teachers always keep the hearts of children. And yet I didn't want to be anything but what I am, because a teacher is the greatest character in the world.

How have you the heart to blame me? How have you the hardihood for all this headiness? I feel mortified by what you have brought to my door. I am not clear why you are seeking out a teacher for victimization.

I have never had a foray into politics. I have never lived politics for a single day. I have no nose for political news. My ancestral politics is my soil.

It is time I led you into a story of my career. I turned teacher at 25. I entered teaching feeling it promised peace and an opportunity to serve the public, knowing full well it was not a going profession, affording, as it does, merely a meagre flat subsistance. I eke out a sketchy existence. I rely partly on my pay and partly on a small piece of land received by me by inheritance. I double as a part-time farmer and replenish my pittance by daily working my field, raising casual crops. There is health and wealth in farming. This extra income and some dribbles from other scant sources, more often than not, drop to a nadir of Rs. 100 per mensem. The extra income is perilously dependent upon the shaky resources. The small salary and the tiny extras put together do not go far between ten mouths comprising my family. The family is growing without my income growing correspondingly.

I was born to a little fortune. I have nothing in savings. My father, too, had no savings left over. He was a small farmer. Whatever little he had saved had run out during his lifetime. My career dwindled immediately after his death. It was long before I was able to evolve a viable economy and scrape a little money to buy this modest and unpretentious house on a mortgage. The house with a small backyard under fruit trees is my only pride. I, like all other teachers, have a knack for spartan economy. Though I am tight with my money and budget it carefully and scratch for every penny and clip and strip down my needs and expenses to the very bone and bare essentials, I get through it before the month is out.

I am not a fat cat you think I am. I am a man of little straw. My affairs have seldom been in good shape. I have never had fine times. My luck is down. I could hardly be worse off than I am at present. I have nothing extra to feed even a rabbit. I earn a bare living and live in this bleak house, call it a modest house, in great poverty, as desperately poor as a church mouse or a monk in sparse surrounds. I have no overhead income. I have had enough of lean life. I like the lonely anonymity and the primitive way of rural life. I can't afford to have even a small town life. I do not have the talent of society. I have

neither time nor money for social trivilialities. All wordly amusements are vapid to me. I am all the time living pretty much to myself. A Giani, like God, is a bad mixer.

"(No, God mixes too much unseen. God is always within us to expel the Satan from within us" I interjected. He continued):—

I live on loans. I have many debts. I am in debt head over ears, always out at elbows. My economy runs on debts and debits. I have perennial worries. Though I over-strain myself, I have nothing for a rainy day. Money runs through my fingers. I invariably go borrowing and sorrowing. Though I have gone heavily into debt and am everlastingly bankrupt, I have never filed for bankruptcy because of self-respect. I am still several thousands in the red. I can pay only a little on my debts. I am unable to discharge these debts in full for lack of extra means to restore my finances. A teacher's life is a life of stringency. I have nothing to purchase a little business, if only in an effort to add just a modicum to my thin salary. By all accounts, I shall never have a brash financial life. I have burnt the candle at both ends. I am now too poor to fend off hardship or stave off liquidation. My creditors are dunning me for the old debts. More than most, my financial position is absolutely untenable and, as they say, when I die my only mourners would be my creditors. Death pays all debts. But before death obliges me, I dearly wish to be in the clear and be a civic figure of some consequence. At present, I am too poor to do anything mlschievous.

I: A source says that Ajaib Singh is your prospective sonin-law in secret.

Giani: No, it is incorrect. I would never take an outlaw as my son-in-law. I urge clemency. I am the victim of a confidence trick. I am in the clear but I can get away only by the grace and guidance of the Police.

I: All this serves you right. A sinner suffers. You have only yourself to blame for the worst plight in which you find yourself today. You played foxy. It is you who have contrived this dreadful spectacle. Your own guilt has brought you grief. You have rammed down your own throat a most distasteful pill. You felt no responslbility for your own fate. I don't know how to blow the storm over. You are late.

Your last chance was to be first. You did wrongly what you should have done rightly. You did wrongly cooperate with a spy. You did wrongly non-cooperate with the custodians of law. You harboured a spy and then, on being approached by me, you failed to cut out the acting and tell the true tale. You gave the lie a start and now you find it difficult to catch up with it. Your indiscretion has gone far beyond legal limits. Even a swinging drunk won't commit such a blunder and play fast and loose with the law as you did. You knowingly violated the law. You were your own law. The result is that now you are under the lash of that very law. The inexorable law has at last caught up with you. You have been caught to your own discretion, if not to your own blatant indiscretion. Nobody can get round the law and escape its widespread tentacles by cunning or the fastest running.

As one gentleman to another, I tell you frankly that I can't do anything in the matter unless you help yourself by placing all your cards and that of Ajaib Singh on the table. You can't keep anything under wraps. I can't operate outside the unrelenting law. I can visualise no easy escape. The decision would be purely at law. Your story won't stand up. A Giani should not have followed the lower law. Your pontifical mantle has fallen and you can no longer plead virtue once you crossed into the realm of the lawless. I can't take your word for anything. You have been telling me a whole series of wicked lies about the truth and sloughing me for your convenience. Your wiles and guiles and sly talk still rankle with me. Your explanation is too weird to be taken seriously. I am no wiser for all the calculated sermon so vociferously trumpeted by you and jettisoned by me. I refuse to believe you are recluse from the realities of law and life. You are not the dummy you pretend to be. You are more than naively involved in it. You are astute enough to know its dire consequences. I have come for you. You are in the dock. Fate is your foe. Yours is now a luck story.

Giani: I am painfully situated. I find myself caught in cross-fire from four sides, from the law, from my community, from Ajaib Singh and from my conscience. I am a traitor all the time (*i*) to you and the country when I did not help you in your guise as a deshbhagat (*ii*) to you and the law if I don't help you now as a Police Officer (*iii*) to my community and the country if I don't

help the real deshbhagat, Ajaib Singh and (*iv*) to my own conscience and Ajaib Singh for breach of my word given to him under a heavy oath of confidence. I am now a straw caught in a sudden whirlwind beaten on all sides. It is going to my heart to defy the law or, alternatively, to desert Ajaib Singh so cruelly. To desert one who looks upon you as his only wicket in this wicked world is not cricket. It would cause me an unbearable wrench to betray a pupil, a ward, a brethren.

I: You should not let your feelings get the better of truth. It is you who have sandwitched yourself between crime and your community and between espionage and harbourage. With what face are you now making too many terms with me after I myself ferretted you out of your deep depths with all your dishonest denials? You can't take advantage of your own wrong. You can't both approbate and reprobate.

Giani: Don't you singe my beard for nothing. I took compassion on a misguided tramp. This is my crime, my first scrape with law. I now realise that old men are twice boys. I have been a fool altogether. I never knew I was putting my hand in the fire for nothing. My folly will haunt me all my life. I am innocent.

I: Don't you strain the truth if you have any compunction for the beard. If you were to tell flagrant lies for a co-religionist, you would be more religious than honest. Couldn't you put your piety to a better use elsewhere? You should not allow your communal emotions to prevail over law and truth. I have no doubt that you are Ajaib Singh's puffer. Your guilt, if publicised, would be patent to your community and the whole world. Whatever your height in public estimation, you committed both a crime and a tragic folly. Why interject irrelevancies and indulge in generalities? Come straight.

Giani: I would if I could. My only worry is that the case will bring me infamy in the eyes of the public without profiting me a nickel. I wonder if you realize how pretty tough of a job it is for a teacher to depose against one of his taught belonging to his own community in the face of the soul-searing communal canker in the Indian body-politic. I am a substantial resident of the town, teaching here for the best part of twenty years. It would jeopardise my standing at this place where I am highly considered at present. I have

honour without fortune. My deposition for the prosecution would spell both my dishonour and disaster. My future among my community is on my mind. I shall be deposing at great risk to myself. I would be destoryed or disgraced in reprisal by my community even if I were strongly supported or placed in protective custody by the powers that be. If nothing more, I'll suffer a civil death. I would be ex-communicated by the society and cursed as a traitor to my country if I were to be any more a party to his imminent punishment. My evidence against Ajaib Singh would be resented as a public injury. The scandal will stall my career as a teacher in good standing and contaminate my life. It would make my name stink in the countryside and I would lose all credit with the public. It will drive me out of my mind. You can't imagine how the people will indulge in tricky talk about me. They would ask "what the hell is this teacher messing around in politics for"?

(Up to a point, he was right).

I : Don't be a moral coward. Your conscience should be your community and your courage of conviction to tell the truth your code of conduct. The people seldom meet you half-way, even if you say or do not say what they would want you to say or not to say. Let them say what do they say. You must tell the truth and shame the community.

Why should a Giani taint truth? It is not like a Giani to deliver moving homilies on morality and then not to tell what he knows the truth. Even if the telling of truth incenses the people or makes out an offence, it is better to tell than not to tell. It is for a Giani to keep himself and the people good, whatever the cost or the consequences.

Tell the truth and forget the trash. One of the advantages of telling the truth is that you don't have to remember till tomorrow what you say today.

"No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar"—Abraham Lincoln.

Giani : (nodded glum acquiescence and pleaded in terror)

Please save me from the ignominy of the hangman's noose. For the life of me, I am ready to place my cards on the table. I am sorry I have been such a long time. I am as good as dead. I have been lying lifeless, lamenting my late luck. I am full of remorse

and fear for something wrong. My conscience haunts me inexorably. Please get me straight. I am neither so much a scholar of law nor a man of public affairs. I am racked by grief. My future is out of my hands.

I have been married for 25 years today. I have an almost overspill family with a brood of seven children spaced rather closely from 18 to 5 years. Kindly have pity on me for them. The police should practise human indulgence for the needy. You are the only one who can doctor my disease. I am a fringe figure, nothing more than an accomplice of Ajaib Singh's distress. As my very name, Sewa Singh (a Singh who serves) denotes, I simply served and saved a poor, patriotic Sikh from dire destitution, never knowing that it would turn out an ominous name. I am at worst an unwilling offender. You shouldn't think any worse of me than what I am actually guilty of. Kindly give me a good character before your officers. Your intercession with your officers might keep my name out of this case and save me from an absolutely undeserved punishment.

(It was not easy for the Giani to make up his wavy mind between truth and his sympathy with the spy. I knew that he would tell the truth out of helplessness. Therefore, I warned him).

I : It would be futile to bemoan the sad situation. If any, the only panacea to relieve your mind of the deep-rooted malady is that you compose yourself and make a clean-breast of everything that Ajaib Singh confided in you. It is time you told the truth unmindful of the consequences or it would be no use hand-wringing over spilt milk. You have been bad and mad enough to hide and help a spy. It was a bad business at the best. If you have really a big nursery to tend, why didn't you first order your own family affairs before taking a suicidal step in harbouring a spy ?

Giani : What is to become of me? I won't come to harm if I tell the truth ?

I : You will, if you don't. As they say, a fault once denied is twice committed, and once it is confessed, it is halfredeemed. The sooner you give up your immutable attitude, the better for you. The police can't transpose an accomplice to the category of a witness. I wonder if I could give you a chance to turn State's

evidence. If I could, you could wish for nothing better. This is the only way to a sane and speedy recovery from your suicidal folly. But whether you depose for the prosecution or not, all is one to the case. We have enough to catch the culprit. I have yet to see whether you would make a true statement and unless you do this, you are sure to go the way of the principal accused for the first degree offence of espionage.

And if you tell the truth, I assure you that this would be your last contact with law in this case. In addition, we would recommend you to the good graces of local police to ensure your safety.

Giani : Excuse me one moment. If possible, reprieve me for some days. My memory has faded. I have become as dull as ditch water. I am lately feeling out of sorts. My nerves have gone wrong. The shock has knocked quite a few years off my life. I feel instant old age.

I : Why are you sparring for time? You can't have all the time you wish. I can't vouchsafe you time indefinitely. Timids take time to tell the truth. Time taints truth. Suspense strains sense and sensibility. Your memory should not belie you. You alone forget what every one else remembers. You are raking up excuses to disengage yourself from your commitment. I again exhort you to truth in the face of an inevitable fate. I can give you a few minutes' grace only.

Giani : (said with non-challance)

You shouldn't mind my hesitation. I would take time to collect my wits and gather myself together. As I stand at the time, I am in a haggard state, befogged about everything.

I : No, you are playing for time to recover your conscience.

Giani : (smiled sadly).

No, I have a stable and constant conscience. I am not in the game. I have had neither art nor part in what Ajaib Singh might have been doing. My hesitation is natural enough. I am careful with you because I do not know you. After all, we are total strangers to each other.

I : But we have a common friend in truth and it has never given a slip. Truth is too familiar to need any introduction. If you do not know me, you know truth. Truth is neutral. Truth is eternal. Truth first is truth last. Tactics can never get the better of truth.

Tell the truth for the sake of truth. This should dispel your fears. Nothing but truth can be a salve to a guilty conscience. Don't dissemble with God and lap up fantastic stories. Tell the truth with good grace without investigating the investigator and without making up fanciful stories. You seem to be habitually allergic to truth. But now you shall need to know just how to tell the truth or law will wait for you to die. You should presume yourself on trial for life.

Giani : But truth is invariably bitter and biting.

I : Even so, why should a Giani taint truth? Your fears are largely nightmares. I have done my utmost to ease them.

Giani : I am all the way with truth.

I : But not your own brand of the truth so far. It is that brand that is bitter and biting.

Giani : (worsted in argument, he winced)

I am willing to place the facts before you as I know them.

I : Is this your willingness or helplessness? Are you moved by argument or by threatened punishment?

Giani : (gave a rueful and insipid smile. I smiled in sympathy).

Assuredly willingness. Once I decide to say a thing, I say it willingly and truthfully. I swear I am out of it. I am in God's keeping.

I : No. (snapped I). It doesn't make a dimes' worth of difference to the law whether you were actually in or not. But, unfortunately, you were accessory after the fact. It is no use to protest innocence or pretend surprise. Truth is visible at a glance.

Giani : You are a hard man to satisfy. You have gone deep enough. You take a wry view of whatever I say. I assure you I am a gentleman of a good family with a name in the countryside. I am greatly looked up to in the town also. I shall cease to be worth anything to the prosecution the moment I cease to be myself. I have said nothing and done nothing to cross you or the law or truth.

The emotional strain has been too great. I have a grim future. I cannot get over my grief. I am allergic to law but not to truth. Do excuse me just this once. Just save me this time from torment and uncertainty and I promise to come clean and make

up for my mistakes by telling what Ajaib Singh had told me. My life is on the wane. I am already fifty upwards and would soon be in the evening of my life, having the last look at this world. I will now more than ever tell all I know being the truth. I'll tell you everything down to the most minute, the most trivial details.

I : (Anger ebbed away, dissolving soon into sympathy. I rambled back and finished up by warning him) :—

I am not angry at all. If my sagacious advice is anger, then I am angry. I now feel that I was ill-advised to give you advice. It is heeded least where it is needed most. All this makes me to appreciate what a sage (Bacon) has said :

"Do not give advice. The wise do not want it and the fools will not take it".

You say you are an old man. Well, this is all the more reason that you should not leave the world with too many lies on your conscience. An old man is worse than an undertrial for a first degree murder, expecting sure death any moment. An expert defence counsel may get his client a discharge, an acquittal or, if worse comes to the worst, a conviction for a limited term for man slaughter. An old man, on the other hands, heads for an inevitable capital punishment. Any amount of pleadings can't delay or quash his ghastly sentence. His age is at once a most devastating prosecutor, a most fatal witness and, above all, a most convicting judge in its own cause—death. So, you, an old man, must tell the truth and get clearance from God and His men before you are irretrievably pushed across the deathly border into oblivion. Tell all about Ajaib Singh's mission as he told you; nothing more, nothing less.

Giani : For sure, I'll tell all I know. I don't know which way you'll take it. I am on the last leg of my life, an empty old age where one is frequently "under repairs". I don't look it. This is because I am a teetotaller. I can pass for a kid at the age of 50 !

(This was how the Giani took too long to at last say shortly "Yes". He appeared to have been so hard-hit that he now took it all with a bow. He was too miserable to say "No". But this was long after I had worked upon his feelings and emotions with the pathos of a disinterested well-wisher. The words sank home. He listened to all this with painful penitence and silent

gratitude. He wilted with dismal relief and sulked and exalted his worries, expecting some clear assurance. He tugged at my sleeve time and again and spoke with painful pauses lasting as long as a minute as if he were pensively preparing his next reply. The silent recessions did not mean his consent to speak out his inner mind. I was inclined to feel that he was all the time prompting me into giving him some sort of promise. Nothing of the kind could be done as any promptings and promises made by an investigating officer are fraught with the danger of the man over-doing his job with intent: (*i*) to protect himself and (*ii*) to placate the investigating officer. Though I had already made up my mind to use him as a witness, nothing of the kind was disclosed to him until after he had made a statement as to what was within his knowledge and whether he was prepared to stick to it. Before he made such a statement, I confined myself to a general discussion and discourse with a view to satisfying him as to where his duty lay as a good citizen of India. He veered round from his original position of desperate denials into disclosing what was within his knowledge. It is always for the investigating officer to ensure that a witness or an accused person does not add or pad anything in the telling.

(But with all the pains taken by me and the promises made by him, it took the Giani long enough to come to himself or look like himself, not to speak of returning to his previous full form. He hunched forward, furrowed his brow, lowered his eyes, stroked his bristly beard, scratched at his ear and grudgingly, lowly and slowly, warmed up, raised the pitch to a climax and made a statement. He spoke with the guilt an innocent has when he fears he may not be believed. He regained his composure and kept it).

Giani : Ajaib Singh was a good guy.

I : Now you take the evil along with the good !

Giani : I have seen Ajaib Singh a good deal from 1925. He was barely out of childhood when he joined the Khalsa High School, Taran Taaran. He was petite and pretty with dramatic good looks. He was tender and true, modest and demure, shy and introspective, keeping to himself. He seemed an early bloomer. He had a slight figure to start with but within days of his admission to the school, he grew, as if with indecent haste, into a debonair gymnast, a creditable and bright breezy footballer in his teens. He played centre on the school team. He particularly pitchforked into a supreme runner at the school. Being the scion of an agricultural family and a hulking and husky young boy, he shared the farm-chores with his father.

He was a boy of contradictions. He gave early signs of his potential both as a good and a bad student in patches. Teenagers are a difficulty and he was. He was a callow, raw youth, too busy to study. He played the truant, attending the school spasmodically. He often arrived late at his class and treated the school as a hangout for young idlers. He grew to adolescence but deteriorated into a difficult youngster, a problem boy full of broil and turmoil. He had quite a temper. He was a riotous youngman in the first flush of his boyhood, explosive and revengful, brash, rash and spiteful. He had the unreasoning petulance of a raw student, a lively lad of an intermeddling age, wayward and wistful. He was among the back-benchers, behaving as bulls and bears. Bold as brass, he developed a taste for trouble and a flair for fighting in his callow teens. He would often start a quarrel with the first boy that came handy and set the whole place by the ears. He was a swaggering teenage delinquent who committed every crime in the school calendar, a perfect nuisance to his teachers and parents. His father was obliged to treat him the hard way with richly deserved repeat beatings.

Though not much of a student or particularly bright or brilliant, he was not a moron. He was no worse than any other student of his abilities and disabilities. At times, he gave promise of being a tolerably committed student who did only moderately in the exams. On balance, he was a slow student, not far from the bottom, being the third lowest in a class of 40. He was generally fairly lower down in the final placings in the house-examinations. He appeared to have been held back in his education by multifarious distractions. He was occasionally seen in windy and unsubstantial company. Once he was alleged to have mixed up with certain doubtful and dissolute boys. One of his associates was known to be promiscuous, much of an oversexed lady's boy. In my view, though he kept bad company, he had never touched the stuff. Though his physical strength and bad company had unduly credited him with sexual exploits, his actual conduct did not import any moral turpitude.

He was a patriotic guy from his early teens. Though he was utterly unmathematical, he had the mental maturity necessary to understand politics. A burly

boy, he made his first foray into politics early so that he attained political manhood in his adolescence. With the spirit of the rebel burning in him, he often harangued fellow-students on politics.

Catch them young, they say. Yes, correct them young, I say. I often berated him that his neglect of studies and his occasional dip in sexual gyrations and premature interest in politics were cashing in on his fathers' name. The resonant warnings were wasted on him. He was full of youthful vigour and folly. He never got out of mischief. He had a terrific father who grilled him whenever he did anything wrong. He was a troubled and troublesome boy. He failed the matric course in the first attempt but then scraped through in the second. He was placed inside the disgraceful third division by just 5 marks. He was now desperate to die but death by suicide failed him. He did nothing to propitiate his grieving father. Deeply disappointed, his father, once a demanding task-master, treated him distantly. I always sympathised with his sulking father. Ultimately, though still an adolescent he turned upon his irate and domineering father and stalked from his house for good. He had by now grown out of confirmation age into young manhood. He was contemplating marriage a few months away when he went abroad to seek adventure and fortune, never knowing the final fate. But no girl was willing to run a matrimonial risk with a guy suspected of living in adultery.

Briefly, he was at once an example of inconsistencies, an informal and gamesome youngman, a runaway playing hooky from the school too often and yet a tolerably pushful student. He had never had a well-rounded education. He had all the pleasures and pangs of youth. He was basically a good boy, a likely-looking lad in his formative years, keen on games. He had an unsettled childhood. He was just out of boyhood and slightly heading towards manhood when he left school to look for a living abroad. But before he was out of the school, he had a name.

On his return from abroad, he came to me and gave me his story in full. He confided in me all about his mission from start to finish. He made a clean-breast of everything in confidence. He disclosed names of persons and places visited by him along with the

dates and purpose of those visits ever since his return to India. He initiated me into the mysteries of his mission in the hope I might suddenly take a liking to it. He told me how he, among other Indian civilians and prisoners of war, had been picked up by the Japanese, given training in espionage and thrown in the jungles of Assam with certain equipment and instructions to operate and collect intelligence at places of assignment and transmit it across the border. It appeared that the Japanese had taken a shine to the rugged youngster. He gave me an account of their training in espionage such as the method and places of collection of intelligence and its nature and transmission. He confessed to me in detail what he had all this time been doing for the Japanese ever since his landing in India.

I assure you his exotic mission received little more than a shrug from me. I consider espionage as either a joke or a sin. Therefore, I urged him home but he refused to agree. He warned me to keep his mission and movements in the country a super secret in the national interest.

I: How did Ajaib Singh strike you? What sort of a man was he now to see?

Giani: He seemed quite serious about his mission. He had outgrown his boyish pranks. Once a never-do-well seemed to have become an ever-do-well. He has now the makings of a man. He is more than serious for his years. He appears to have improved his scrappy education considerably. He speaks unleavened English. I must admit that I had goofed at the railway station. I had, on your first visit to me, contacted him and persuaded him to meet you but he had refused to see you, fearing lest his meeting with you should expose him and his mission. I lied to you heavily about his whereabouts. Now I want to square myself by telling how it had happened. It was under his instructions that I had told you at the railway station that I had not been able to trace him. Again, I had received Ismail's telegram and a follow-up letter for Ajaib Singh and passed them on to him. As before, he refused to acknowledge the telegram and the letter or see him at Lahore on the appointed dates at the Museum.

I: Did Ajaib Singh have any suspicion that the letter was in a disguised handwriting?

Giani: No.

I never told him how far I had committed myself to you without admitting him into my confidence. The telegram and the letter gave him a nausea. He and I had got the feel we were fooling Ismail, not knowing it were ourselves. We were not aware of this backstage drama. The whole thing staggers me very much. But knowing as I do that I had kept back from the authorities what Ajaib Singh had done and what he had confided in me, I am no longer unduly surprised. I had done it all in error. I retract my error that I stood a fool. I curse myself for a fool who was nothing more than a manipulated dummy. It turns me cold to think of what I have done. I must be mad to get mixed with him. I never realised the right and wrong of this tortuous trick played by one of the taught to his teacher. I assure you I'll avoid perilous pupils and never harbour such grisly guests in future. I should have given up deshbhagats as a pack of idiots. You'll kindly take my inadvertent mistakes in good part.

(All that the Giani said about Ajaib Singh and his own profession as a teacher with his subsidiary occupation by farming and his old age could be summed up in the words of Disraeli:—

"Youth is a blunder;

Manhood a struggle;

Old age a regret."

(I recorded the Giani's full statement, covering about 28 foolscap pages, starting from early afternoon till very late in the evening).

I: You know most but are saying least.

Giani: No, that is about all Ajaib Singh had told me. This is the truth and I do not know anything different.

I: It may be Ajaib Singh told you more than you can recall he did.

Giani: No, I am absolutely clear that that is the long and short of it.

I: Why didn't you dissuade Ajaib Singh from his dangerous mission?

Giani: I didn't offer unasked advice.

I: But you gave him unasked assistance! You are spectacularly luckier than you deserve, luckier than your fate. This is as bad a case as any could be. You

came very close to death. People have been wound up in prison on mere suspicion during the war. Why didn't you tell all this a little sooner?

Giani: My folly and my fears. Follies and fears die hard. It takes longer to tell a truth than a falsehood. I am no less to blame. I lent my name to a farce. I look as bad as sin. I would take time to reverse the wrong step. I have few words and fewer pleas in defence. My lasting fear is that all this would now compromise me in the eyes of my community. Please don't give me away to my countrymen. Please don't tell Ajaib Singh that I put you on to him.

I: Incidentally, did you or Ajaib Singh have any doubt about my identity?

Giani: (with a forced smile). I did have a slight presentiment and a shrewd suspicion when you met me first. But your slow and subdued version regarding your identity and your mission had rung true with me and Ajaib Singh. We took you for Ismail throughout. We had suspected nothing out of line. That was the way it had appeared to us. We never knew that that was not the way it actually was. Ajaib Singh had asked after you and I had told him all about you.

(This eased my fears about the exposure of my identity. I depart, promising to see him again the following morning).

I: (Next morning. Since what is stated before the Police is of an ephemeral character, I was keen to have his statement recorded by a magistrate).

We test the veracity of a statement by producing the dependent before a competent magistrate. You shall have to testify *viva voce* before a Court what you have stated before the Police. Would you tell on Ajaib Singh in court what you honestly feel are the facts within your knowledge and refrain from padding anything calculated to cover or clear him out of misplaced sympathy?

Giani: I am prepared to make a statement and speak my piece to the best of my memory before a magistrate if the one before you does not satisfy you.

I: No, it does, but this is what is generally done under the law. Let us go to Amritsar.

(Please note I did not tell him the previous evening that I would be taking him to a magistrate for recording his statement.

Fore-warned is fore-armed. Given time, truth gets alloyed, unless it is recorded hot on the anvil).

We reached Amritsar by road at about 9 a.m. I saw the District Magistrate, Mr. L. P. Addison, I. C. S., and requested him to have the Giani's statement recorded by a competent magistrate under section 164, Cr. P. C. The District Magistrate deputed Mr. Hadi Ali Khan, a Section 30 Magistrate in Amritsar (now in Lahore), to do it. I produced Giani Sewa Singh before the Magistrate and he very promptly recorded his statement covering about 30 pages in about seven hours. The Giani made a statement before the Magistrate similar to the one made before me on the previous day. His matter-of-fact statement contained a wealth of evidence. I warned him for the last time that if he stood by his statement death might fail him out of compassion, though he hadn't failed death by his treasonable dealings with Ajaib Singh and his double-dealings with me. He assured me he would keep faith with me and go by facts to the very last.

Giani: My word is my bond. You will find me firm on my pledge and promise. There is no stopping me, once my mind is made up. Your doubts about me have been more than paid by his arrest through me. I assure you where my preference lies. I give you my hand upon my word that I'll never hedge my pledge. I'll keep my faith with you. I am said to never have told a lie.

I: From now we are best of friends. You won't come to grief if you keep your word. You should stick to truth to earn a fine escape from an inexorable fate.

He breathed an anxious sigh of relief. He had tears of satisfaction in his eyes and laughed his previous fears away. His dread no longer persisted and he seemed to have brightened up into a new man, insistently professing help. He now ventured a few liberties.

Giani: I hope you will spare me every anxiety now that I have made a full statement. If satisfied, please tell your officers ; if not, please tell me.

I: Of course, I would, provided you conduct yourself as good as your statement on being cited as a witness.

Giani: Is your decision to cite me as a witness final?

I: Yes, final and absolute.

Giani: (ruefully requests:)

May I see Ajaib Singh? I hope you won't refuse me such a trifle after we have squared all accounts.

I: Why?

Giani: I just want to whisper pleasantries into his ear.

I: What pleasantries?

Giani: That he needn't worry; he won't come to grief.

I: Why such assurance?

Giani: But then I want to clear my position that I wasn't the one to impart information about his whereabouts to the Police. I want to tell him that I had no finger in the pie, that I did not play the police and that I was as good a victim of a booby trap as he. After telling him all this, I want to know how do I stand with him now.

I: Why should a deponent seek detente with an accused involved in a case of espionage? Why should you again jeopardise your position in the eye of law by hobnobbing and keeping up appearances with a spy after making a voluntary statement against him? Why should you stimulate sympathy with a man who has landed you into the clutches of law? Why pretend clearance if you sincerely mean to stand by your statement? I reassure you that you are luckier than you realise.

(Having said all this, I gave him a round "No".)

The Giani now stood corrected and converted. He had recovered his full faculties and, like a man just resuscitated from death, he looked lively again. He was extremely congenial and communicative.

I: Would you recall your promise to see me at the Taran Taaran Railway Station directly your school had closed for the day? Why hadn't you kept your word?

Giani: Ajaib Singh was reluctant to see you. It was why I was hesitant to hold out any promise. But in view of your insistance, I had promised to meet you. I am sorry I couldn't make it for obvious reasons.

We departed. I came to Lahore and produced a copy of the statement before the D. I. G. and the S. P. (Security). The D. I. G. remarked with an easy smile that this was an achievement far greater in importance and excellence than Ajaib Singh's arrest. He said that this was still another dramatic and spectacular success obtained patiently, prudently and painstakingly. "You have pushed your good luck far enough", said he. Continuing, he mentioned the familiar cliche: "Where there is a will, there is a way".

The Giani's statement was in fact a very firm and incontrovertible piece of incriminating evidence against Ajaib Singh, being his extra-judicial confession before a private individual in the absence of the police. His confession before the Giani reflected his inner mind, his intentions and activities. It had many resonances. The Giani stated before me and the Magistrate that though Ajaib Singh had lost his revolver and wireless set in landing in Assam, he had been purposely collecting intelligence for transmission to the Japanese through some of the other spies operating elsewhere in India or through somebody by the land route. As discussed at some length, but for the Giani's statement, the prosecution had not much to go by except that it was supported by an array of corroborating bits which tied everything together.

As mentioned earlier, the D. S. P. who investigated this case in Assam, was able to recover nothing whatsoever. His failure again made the D. I. G. sceptical about the final fate of the case. In his opinion, and this he recorded on the relevant file, the solitary statement of the Giani would be hardly sufficient to secure Ajaib Singh's conviction. He remarked that the evidence, consisting as it did of only the Giani's statement, was moonshine and would not stand up to close examination. Like him, everybody placed small reliance on the available evidence. I argued quite the other way about. As before, I held steadfastly to my previous view. I took comfort from the fact that the Giani's statement, coupled with the testimony of the approver, Ismail, and other circumstantial factors, would make out, in the aggregate, quite an iron-cast case for the prosecution. This was, however, the type of a case in which success largely depended upon the behaviour of the Giani in court. The circumstances were such that we had to take most of it on trust and also have all the loose ends tied up. I had before me the old adage—You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. Again, even assuming that the Giani would play, as expected, it all depended upon the construction that might be put on the factual and circumstantial evidence by the court. Some cunning carpers and captious critics, who are plenty and to spare on such occasions, feeling that the case had given me an edge on them, profusely predicted that its final fate would presently prove that my quixotic insistance not to arrest the Giani was more sensitive than sensible and that I would presently find myself disgraced by winning the trophy!

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VIII.—THE SPY SPEAKS

Spies do not speak straightaway. And when they do, they do not speak straight. True to their training, money or mission, they duck truth, as if they have a right to tell lies. They live on false papers and false poses, tortuous wiles and tricky guiles.

They are hard-nuts, impervious, made of stern stuff. They parry. They tarry. They temporise. They prevaricate, linger and malinger. They hunger-strike and threaten suicide. They hallucinate, curse or hurl filth or filthy abuses.

Very often, they keep stubborn silence, believing that they would be better off mute! They are deliberately dull, dumb or deaf, irritatingly tight-tongued "Don't Says" or cunningly "Don't Knows". They exploit Shakespeare's dictum "Men of few words are the best men." They overplay "Silence is gold". And when they choose to speak, they try to fob off interrogators with rigmorale replies.

There is no handbook, no repertory to consult and no formula to follow on interrogation. The situation is met as it arises. It is not a tame affair, a hunk of cheese, to coax correct information from sworn spies. Interrogators have to feel their own way to chase them at every turn of the corner to get them to the surface from the deep depths of their inner shell by sharp questions within the framework of the law of the land. Interrogation is a conversion conversation, a battle of wits, to draw the subjects out of their mental hide-outs and explode their mind by a counter-mind.

Ajaib Singh, like his class, was anything but ducksoup. He feigned insanity and burst into tirades against everybody around. He parried. He lied. One lie made many. He soon found it difficult to overtake his own lies.

About an hour in the morning was just a patrol action for every detenu in the Fort. The Lines Officer stated that, in my absence, Ajaib Singh had conducted himself as a man gone berserk, hurling a salvo of nasty abuses at everybody who dared go near him, that he had been hopping mad or sitting all night, in apparent stupefaction, soliloquising in fits and snatches, swapping funny stories and that whenever he wanted him to come out of his cell for a stroll, he would yell obscenities, pick

up his chamber-pot, flourishing it in a pose to do battle, spew out filth and smear the first available policeman. He said that the man had vehemently refused to be photographed, even though a Constable had grabbed his head to yank his face towards the camera.

Ajaib Singh was really a great deal worse. He was boiling stark mad. Once again he tried to turn over his faeces-can to impede the approaching officers. Whenever he got to his feet, he lost his head. He looked on with unseeing eyes as if he was not all there. Once he danced in demented frenzy. He tore at his beard and behaved as if he was tormented by some incurable disease. Almost every night he screamed imprecations at the police, awakened the off-duty staff from their first sleep by his top clamour and menacing shouts, berating them in the most lethal language, pouring abominable raillery. A youngman, all fire and flash, he twisted his mouth into a challenging leer, clenched his fists, made threats and turned tartar. He lambasted everybody, loud and long. He gnashed his teeth upon all and sundry with great fury. He hobbled about on bandaged feet, remonstrated loudly, screamed himself hoarse, poured out his banter, howled and bawled curses at his captors and custodians. At times, he would lie down with his body and head lolling about in the manner of the dead. He often threatened to bash himself against the walls of his cell. He barricaded the solitary window on his cell as if to stand a siege. Like a leather-lunged lunatic, he almost tore the place down with his noise, shouting hysterically. His cries dissolved into wails and hallucinations of a bedlamite. He punctuated his rough and rude voice with snatches of English like "toadies", "agents", etc. He divided his fire between British Officers and their Indian components.

How to tame his tongue? I called for silence, snapping : "stay quiet, you have mischievously gone mad. Any amount of malingering or crying foul won't do. What sort of a skunk are you?" But he kept talking to himself, muttering something unintelligible, as if caught in a mental turmoil. He would subside into sullen silence suddenly, sit stolidly, impeccably quiet and withdrawn, staring vacantly into my face and the place.

I kept at him. The consensus was that the serious nature of the offence and the horror of being involved in it, the terrors of solitude and total isolation in the bare cell and the gruff and brusque voices of the Police guard had weighed heavily on him and started off fits of madness. Like the other detenus we had kept him strictly incommunicado. It was possible that racked by loneliness, he had turned mad. One was inclined to feel that his ravings were due to the ravages of some disease. I, however, being a bit of a practical psychiatrist, tickled him and

discovered that he was putting on an act, playing the maniac, feigning mental blackouts in an attempt to lay a basis for an insanity plea. I told him an anecdote to make diversion and to see how he reacted. He listened intently, with his chin in his hand, forgetting his made-up madness! He was mad no more. His madness had a story to tell. His improvised madness was an imposture.

He was examined for insanity. We were advised that he was certainly not mad, much less a raving lunatic, but absolutely sane, clinically normal, knowing right from wrong. We were also advised to put him on a rigorous diet. We plied him with extra food in the vain hope of toning down his bad mood and emotional imbalance.

The examining medical officer also advised that the man should do his morning constitutional regularly daily. As before, he refused to move out of his cell. "Get hold of him" said the Lines Officer between his teeth. On this, as many as three Constables heaved to pull him out. He now banged the door shut, flared up and came out charging and roaring like a caged animal.

I had a rush call from the Lines Officer saying that the man had made a bold bid to commit suicide during his walk on the first floor of the Fort. He was said to have adopted a peculiar *modus operandi.* He fell on the beat, rolled and reeled in violent convulsions, then picked himself up, jumped the ramparts and plunged ten feet through the air to the groundfloor, shouting "Jai Hind" (Hail India). Nothing could be done to tackle him in mid-air. He landed on a stack of dry twigs which broke his fall. He survived with a few simple injuries. He lay on the stack, groaning and bleeding from one of the injuries. As before, the doctor did dressing and binding of the injuries and they began to form soon. But for the twigs, he would have fallen to a concrete floor, a sure death, indeed. However fake the fall, it is always the policeman's weakness to wish his subject all well during custody. He was once manacled to a policeman to prevent recurrence of an attempt at suicide.

"Don't you plague this place with your idiocies. You have been shouting too damn loud and too damn much. I again warn you to be on your best behaviour. You have been horribly impertinent to certain officers. You can't outwit law by lame lunacy. You can't frustrate justice by any amount of muck or by a show of running amuck. I must first take you to sanity".

With this warning, I again started working on him. He was, in my experience, malingering, suffering from mid-summer madness and unless he were given a short shrift, he won't stop.

My first task was to set him to talking as he was still behaving a little better than a blithering idiot, dispossessed of all mental poise. Once he fell in mock uncousciousness, making feeble replies vacantly but then he again returned fairly fast. With all his erratic conduct, he was meted out the best of treatment. We were human for all the reputation of our professional work. We gave him no opening for any allegation of torture. Therefore, he softened with time and good words and good food. He started coming round from his deep and determined simulation. He was at last mildly responsive, opening up in bits, slowly and very slowly, indeed, gathering speed subsequently.

The interrogation verged on half conflict and half argument. He started talking. The talk lapsed several times. He stood the interrogation with an unflinching countenance and categorically denied any part in espionage. However, intense interrogation wore him down into a collected man with a veneer of breeding and culture. What follows will show how it developed from start to finish.

For some time, he gave haltingly "yes" or "no" for answers. He had to be prompted along every time by asking "what next", "go on", etc. He soon rapped out his story emotionally, warming up from bits to a mouthful. He was now too voluble to keep back anything about his mind and mission. He was again cautioned but now, like a fiery and forceful speaker, he made a most offending statement under the caution. He used exceptionally strong language with a great relish, rubbing in his point of view from various angles with immense vehemence.

Questions asked by this writer did not necessarily represent his personal or official views. The aim throughout was to draw the spy out and depict his full conduct and convictions under the glare of a dazzling search-light switched from different angles. The interrogation ranged widely over his activities in the performance of his mission in India. It is not possible to depict a full picture of the connotation of his voluminous statement in a short write-up. An effort has, however, been made to condense only its salient portions into a single chapter. It has not been easy or appropriate to commit to paper the barrage of lethal language let loose by the spiteful spy.

I : How you ?

Spy : Indifferent.

I : Have you been abroad ?

Spy : Yes.

I : When did you come back ?

Spy : Quite some time ago.

I : Where have you been since your return ?

Spy : In the country.

I : Did you go home ?

Spy : (No reply).

I : Have you seen your parents on return ?

Spy : (No reply).

I : Where in the country have you been since your return ?

Spy : (No reply).

I : What have you been doing since your return ?

Spy : (No reply).

I : Are you on a mission ?

Spy : (No reply).

I : Isn't it a fact that a foreign power has assigned you a mission in India ?

Spy : (No reply).

I : Why this silence ?

Spy : (No reply).

I : The allegation is that you are on a mission of espionage.

Spy : (Silence).

I : Why all this silence ?

Spy : (With sullen truculence)
I am not prepared to make a statement.

I : Oh, then, you have made a statement.

Spy : (With great surprise)
What! I haven't made any statement.

I : No, yau have.

Spy : No, I haven't.

I : I say, you have. Your statement is that you are not prepared to make statement. You have made a negative statements, a statement of refusal. A statement is not necessarily or invariably a positive statement. It may be a statement of refusal or a statement of denial. At any rate, it is a statement.

A negative statement is as good a statement as a positive one. A refusal to make a statement without any

apparent rhym or reason is a dangerous boomerang, damaging the subject beyond redemption. You'll soon rue your refusal to make a statement as an irretrievable miss.

Spy : (Silence).

I : Silence is the characteristic of a spy. You are silent. You are a spy. Silence slurs truth. Silence in a case of espionage is equivalent to an incriminating speech. It shows the depth of the man. Smooth and silent waters run deep.

Spy : (provoked into an out-burst).

No. silence can constitute a characteristic of a spy only where one has a duty to speak. One may keep silence quite innocently.

I : True. But where a man is silent when in conscience he ought to speak he is a spy. This is a case in which you should, both in conscience and in law, not only speak but speak the truth. Truth is spontaneous. In such a situation, silence is suicidal. It becomes as expressive as if the subject openly admits his participation in what he is allegen to have said or done or consented to do in the furtherance of a crime.

Spy : (back into silence).

I : Silence is worse than denial. It is as good or as bad as admission of a guilt. It implies that a reply, if given, would have gone against you. He who keeps silence confesses. There is incriminating confession in your studied silence, cognizable speech in your stares and reprehensible language in your gestures.

Spy : All right, I speak and deny the charge.

I : (His vehement denial gave him away).

Deny, if you can. But can you deny, suppress or controvert hard facts which are no longer secret ?

Spy : Then kill me before you can get anything out of me.

I : You'll certainly get your death wish. Kill we must, now that we know what you said and what you did,working underground.

Spy : (Mumbles a plea of innocence).

I : Whether you flub or fumble I ; mum or mumble, grunt or grumble, you are very much involved in a case of espionage.

Spy : The allegation is as false as it is absurd. I am the victim of some designing man. It is a strange quirk of fate,

a frame-up engineered by my enemies, an abominable conspiracy hatched by them against me in complicity with the Police. The Police are notorious for such frames, trying, as they do, to railroad innocent people to prison to boost their records and rewards. I have committed no overt or covert act at any time after my return from abroad.

I : (I heard him disbelievingly and asked).

Who are your enemies?

Spy : (Silence)

I : Keep silence, if you will. Deny the charge, if you will. Tell lies, if you will. It is all one and the same thing in a case as this. Don't tell me anything, if it helps you. Deny everything, if it helps you. But will it help you to keep silence or deny if what you think thine is now mine and of everybody else? Truth has already peeked through. Prosecution never goes by the silence, speech, statement or denial of an accused. It invariably relies on independent evidence which may be wholly or partly ocular, parol or circumstantial or substantive or indicative evidence. At the same time, however, in all fairness, it is one of the imperatives to give the accused an opportunity to explain his side of the case and, as far as possible, to meet it or defeat it before entering upon a protracted trial, involving immense expense, time and energy of the parties. So, it is your lookout to keep silence or avail of the opportunity to say what you want to say or unsay what we say.

You broke the silence by denial of the charge. The facts in our possession falsify your denial. We know where-from did you come, when and how did you come, with whom did you come, your mission, your equipment, your activities and all. Will you deny all this?

Spy : How have you come by all this ?

I : We know it all, and more, ever since you landed in this country.

Spy : But who is your source? Any person alleged to be on a mission of espionage is forbidden to speak on pain of death. Such a person would rather die than disclose the mission, as the head of a defector rolls invariably.

I : Whatever the bidding or forbidding, pain or penalty, we know it all from many a missionary's mouth and others.

Spy : Who are the missionaries and who "others"? It could be either Ismail or the Giani or both.

I : Whoever and whatever our source, it is for you to recount everything. You are the author of the drama.

Spy : How about the Giani ?

I : The Giani has been very nice and truthful. He is a man of flinty virtues. You should know better than any body else whether a truthful Giani could keep back the stuff. Your mission is no longer a close-preserve between you and the Giani. There are no secrets between me and the man. He has bubbled it all and put you in. It is time you told your side. Knowing, as I do, what you have been saying and doing, you can only live from now onwards on borrowed time. We know you got on the wrong side of the law and that you were your own law.

Spy : (with biting truculence).

Why should patriots be hunted outlaws in their own country? We will have all repugnant laws repealed at the earliest.

I : You are an outlaw by the existing laws of the land. Any plea that the laws are repugnant does not help an out-law. No true patriot can dodge truth by any number of such pleas. The truth is already out. And yet the more I press for it, the more you try to sit on it. Little do you realise that the more you delay it, the more you damage your case. This is the type of a case in which everybody has tried to be first with the information.

Spy : Am I not late in telling what I know, what I did and what I told the Giani?

I : Late you are but it is still time to make amends for the delay. Speak out the truth unless you are anxious to swing at the end of a rope. You must prepare to accept the inevitable.

(Goaded by his guilt, he confessed. He was cautioned that anything that he would say might be held against him. The caution seemed to cause him to dry up completely for minutes but then came the pert claim with the bravado that "deshbhagats" believed in the statement of truth and the performance of duty.

Spy : Whatever my fate, I won't keep back any fact regarding my activities in and out of India.

I : Why did you go to Malaya?

Spy : To seek quick fortune. Though known in the countryside to be a fairly comfortable family, we had often to fight a living from the soil in our village. My father worked our lands well but failed to find enough food and clothing for the family. With all this toil and moil and my little talent, I was able to have only a high school education. Besides, I have many bitter memories. I was not well up in my studies. My father used to grill me for delinquency. I was sick of studies and the big stick. Besides, the family had a bad spell. Crops had to be coaxed out of waterlogged fields.

In the circumstances, I went to Malaya to understudy my brother-in-law, Sucha Singh, in the money-lending business. I have been absent from home eight years. During this period, I diversified my interests and saw through a variety of jobs. I tried quite a number of trades but failed. I was for some time apprenticed to a firm. Consequently, I established myself as a money-lender. I was engaged in this business for about five years. I was very correct and careful in my career in the foreign country. I was so straight in my dealings with the natives that the profession brought me both fame and fortune.

I : Are you married?

Spy : Yes ; I married in Malaya some six years back. I wanted to marry before going to Malaya but my parents would have none of it. This being so, I married a Malayan girl outside my faith. I have no religious inhibitions in matrimonial matters. I had been happily married all these years. I have left my wife behind with two toddlers depending on subsistence allowance granted by the Japanese for the duration of my mission in India.

I picked up a smattering of Japanese during my stay in Malaya. Though my knowledge of the language was still off colour, I was able to hold little odds and ends of conversation in stilted Japanese with the local Japanese.

I : Did you ever go to Japan or any other Far Eastern country during your stay in Malaya ?

Spy : Yes, I did. I went to Japan some time after the commencement of the present war. I went to Tokyo and found the following four Indians making

pro-Japanese broad casts from the Tokyo radio in different languages :—

Ram Murti.	...	English.
Krishta Rao of Bengal	...	Hindi
Dr. Nath of C. P.	...	Hindi
Mangdani.	...	Hindustani.
Dhanna Singh	...	Hindustani.

I stayed in Tokyo for about a fortnight, meeting Indians and their contacts among the Japanese officials. I made many intellectual friends among them.

I then went to Kobe in Japan. Here, I met Dwarka Nath Kapoor alias D. N. Kapoor. He was working as a representative of Messrs Hot Chand Khem Chand of Amritsar, dealing in the export and import of cloth. He was a great admirer of Toyama, founder of the Toyama School of Thought, expounding the theory that "The Soul Never Dies". The incomparable spirit of sacrifice displayed by the Japanese in the war has its roots in this very theory. Again, it is this very spirit which has been the main secret of the Japanese success in the Pacific War.

D. N. Kapoor was also a great admirer of R. B. Bose, a prominent disciple of Toyama. R. B. Bose, a Japanese by nationality and a Hindu by religion, was pro-Japanese and pro-India.

D. N. Kapoor revealed that the Indian prisoners of war in the hands of the Japanese numbered about 1,35,000 and that he and R. B. Bose had been doing pro-Japanese and anti-British propaganda among them.

I learnt that it was at the instance of R. B. Bose that D. N. Kapoor had founded "Bharat Mandir" in Kobe for the Indians in Japan with the ostensible purpose of teaching Japanese and Hindu theology with particular emphasis on the affinity between Hinduism and Buddhism.

I was in Kobe for about ten days. During my stay in Tokyo and Kobe I gathered the impression that the Japanese had had no faith in any European power and that they were considered by all the Western powers including their current allies, Italy and Germany, as "Yellow Peril".

I also felt that the Japanese gave preferential treatment to Indians with intent to capitalise on their national sentiments. With this end in view, they have lately opened a Swaraj

Institute in Kobe (?). The institute soon developed into a school of espionage. One Raghwan took classes in revolutionary propaganda against the British. The trainees in espionage took oath before the Indian national flag to work steadfastly and faithfully for the mission.

I served on the Japanese Intelligence for about six months on the eve of their attack on Malaya. I also served as a Constable in the Japanese Police for about two months following the fall of Malaya to their forces. I now took time off for lessons in politics generally and the current political movements in India particularly at a local college. I was later invalided out of the Police on account of indifferent health. With all my private and official engagements. I have throughout brushed up my halting English considerably.

The Japanese again picked me up to do espionage for them in India after the fall of Burma. They gave me and other selected Indians necessary training in espionage at a place near Rangoon, gave us arms and ammunition, wireless sets and money and dropped us by air in the jungles of Assam. Barring the money, we lost everything in the jungle.

Though we knew that the jungles were full of marauding bears, leopards and other carnivorous beasts, we could not come by land, involving, as it did, our examination by the Police and Customs at various check-posts enroute. It was almost impossible to bluff one's way through the Customs without running the risk of detection.

I : How long have you been in the country?

Spy : Seven months.

I : Come straight and state what overt and covert acts did you commit in the furtherance of your mission during this period ?

Spy : I must admit my tramp across the country. I worked on my mission and visited various gurdwaras, hotels and cantonments at Ambala, Jullundur, Amritsar, Lahore and Nankana Sahib towards its furtherance. I kept notes on different topics and trends engaging the attention of the Government and the public, particularly the various political organisations and subversive movements pulling their weight for the emancipation of the country. I also took photographs of a number of strategic installations of military importance at the Ambala, Jullundur and Ferozepur Cantonments. Among the installations photographed by me was an arsenal at Ferozepur and a military camp at Kasu Begu near Ferozepur.

Fearing lest the written notes should fall into wrong hands, I never allowed any hotel-keeper or a sweeper to do my room. I lately started making mental notes of interesting points instead of jotting them down.

I have also been searching for the sentiments of the people. I noticed that they wanted, as they do. Home Rule and not the rule of one foreigner in place of another.

Playing the role, as I did, of a spy, there just wasn't any place for me to hide. Gurdwaras always provided me with better havens of safety and a pose of pristine innocence and anonymity, respected by the public and unsuspected by the Police. Therefore, I preferred to stay in gurdwaras instead of taking some job likely to cramp my pose as a spy. Besides, gurdwaras gave me good cover, being more strategic than any public club or pub, for gleaning interesting information without causing anybody's suspicion. Law never looks that way.

Gurdwara Sangrana Sahib was the last to offer me a good rendezvous. This was my secret lair for the last three and a half months. I had a cover life as "Giani Amar Singh" at this place. It is about five miles from Amritsar and, as such, it afforded meeasy and frequent opportunities to mix up with a cross section of the people visiting the city and the Golden Temple. I also attended the Sikh festival of Massia held monthly at Taran Taaran.

I have throughout my mission been living as the people do, and, wherever necessary, in good taste, in order to enable me to move about freely in high society in hotels and public places. This was how I utilized the sum of rupees five thousand given to each of us by the Japanese in hundred-rupee notes of Indian currency forged in Burma. I had no difficulty in getting these forged notes changed into tens, fives and ones of genuine Indian currency. The Japanese had promised to slip us at our home addresses more money through reliable repatriates from Burma. I have not been home since and I do not know if the Japanese have been able to keep their not-too-easy promise (This was checked. No money or message was found to have reached his village).

I had a banking account under the assumed name "Autar Singh" in the National Bank of India, Amritsar.

I drew the last balance of Rs. 500 about two and a half months back. (This was verified as correct). I took out a loan of Rs. 200 from the Giani as pocket-money last month. I have been enjoying board and lodging free at various gurdwaras.

I : How did you send intelligence to the Japanese after the loss of your wireless set in landing in the jungles of Assam and the closure of the Indo-Burma land routes to travel and trade because of the war ?

Spy : The facts being what they are, it has not been easy to do the job. About four months back, I got to the frontiers by myself but found that it was difficult to get across without a drastic winnowing and risking one's life. The Burmese were fleeing the country into India. The flow became a flood.

Some four and a half months back, Avdeshwar Rai and I met at a gurdwara in Patna by arrangement. I explained to him my inability to send intelligence across the border. He undertook to do it for me. We exchanged notes and discussed the data collected by each of us. We set out to work on our mission jointly. We collected articles, literature and figures found by the Police in my room at the gurdwara from various persons in authority including senior army and police officers at Delhi and other places.

Avdeshwar Rai claimed to have had collaborators among civilians in U. P., Bihar, Orissa and Bengal. He took me visiting quite a few of them. As decided between us, we operated under pseudonyms and established contact with a number of political parties campaigning against the British Government in these provinces.

We met Kamlesh Bannerji and Indira Datta Sen of the Bolshevik—Leninist Party of Bengal. They advocated an armed revolution and committed a number of acts of sabotage in league with R. S. P. I. (?) They gave us some literature, instigating violence and sedition. The literature included some highly inflammatory material:—

(*i*) We are guerillas.

(*ii*) Streets and Guerilla Fighting.

(*iii*) Inqilab-i-Roos (The Russian Revolution).

(*vi*) Maran Maaran (Kill or Be Killed).

Avdeshwar Rai took me to some of his contacts known for their terrorist activities. Among them were Suresh Chander

Chaudhry, Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Prithwis Basu and Sukhenda Bikesh Chakrabarti and they assured us of their liaison with enemy agents working across the Burma-Assam border manned by the Japanese. Therefore, we gave them such of our collections as were calculated to be helpful to the Japanese. These collections included photos of military installations taken by me at the Ambala, Jullundur and Ferozepur Cantonments.

Avdeshwar Rai also introduced me to Adhir Bannerji, Atindra Ray Chaudhry and Miss Kalayani, members of the United Students Association, Calcutta. We attended a meeting held by them in Rajshahi in 1942. Some of the students took notes of the intelligence collected by us, promising to convey the same to the Japanese in Burma.

Avdeshwar Rai revealed that he had for some time worked with a Miss Usha Mehta in running a freedom radio and that he had cells in the army on the Indo-Burma border. He promised to deliver some of the interesting material to these cells, adding that they would "surrender" themselves to the Japanese with the material. The idea, though fanciful, was far from being impossible.

About this time, we were given to understand by some of our contacts that the Krishak-Praja Party, too, fostered fifth column activities on the Indo-Burma border and that Dhirendra Ray of Dacca and Ratul Ray Chaudhry and Radhika Datta of Pabna were in hiding, working underground in Calcutta.

I : Did you contact any member of the Krishak-Praja Party?

Spy : No. The party was too secretive to take us or any of our local contacts into confidence.

The most significant highlight of our underground activities in Calcutta was our undercover contact with Purnenda Sen Gupta, an expert bomb-maker, who and his confidants were known for immense potentialities for the commission of political crime. We ingratiated ourselves with him through one of our local confidants and accompanied him and some civil guards and workers in coal fields to raid a European hotel for money needed to subsidise our anti-British campaign. Gupta threw a bomb at the office of the hotel. The attack missed the cashier at the counter. Gupta was captured by some employees of the hotel while Avdeshwar Rai and I, being out of the striking range, made good our escape.

I : Do you know the location of the bombs made by Gupta ?

Spy: No.

(An oblique reference about the bombs was reportedly found in a batch of eleven letters addressed to various political workers by anonymous senders. The letters were worded almost identically using the code word "sweetmeats" for bombs.)

We later learnt that some of the accomplices in the bomb outrage had "robbed" an Indian official of a foreign bank in Cawnpur of Rs. 10,000 while he was escorting the money from the bank to the local treasury. The crime was alleged to have been committed with the connivance of the official !

The bomb party was also alleged to have stolen a consignment of Rs. 20,000 worth of revenue stamps from the office of the Deputy Collector, Lucknow.

We met Harendra Chaudhury and Sansaka Sanyal, staunch supporters of the Bose brothers and learnt from them that the Indian National Army (I. N. A.) was operating under the hegemony and tutelage of the Japanese, and that hundreds of young firebrands had crossed into Burma in the guise of destitutes to join the I. N. A. We were sorry to know from them that the Bose brothers and Pandit Nehru were political enemies.

On my return to the Punjab, I went to various places to assess the progress of the agitation. To my disgust, the Punjab was comparatively alarmingly quiet. I went to Lahore and Nankana Sahib. At Lahore, I met Shirimati Rameshari Nehru wife of Brij Lal Nehru of I. Warris Road. She had just come out of jail after serving a sentence under the Defence of India Rules. I did not disclose my correct identity or my mission to her when I requested her to do her best among the women workers in spreading disaffection against the British.

I stayed at Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Nankana Sahib, for about a week. I met scores of Sikh pilgrims and instigated them against the British Government. Among my close contacts at this place was Sardar Atma Singh, Storekeeper of the Gurdwara, and his daughter, Gurcharan Kaur, a 3rd year student of the Lahore College for Women. Gurcharan Kaur showed a very keen interest in my anti-British stance and promised to do her bit among the student circles. She was reported to have been arrested by the Police under the Defence of India Rules some time after my departure for Taran Taaran.

I: What is your equation with the Japanese on the question of independence of India ?

Spy: Nothing beyond a tacit understanding to seek their help to oust the British from India. We have, between India and Japan, a common neurosis against Britain. We have otherwise only a tenuous link with the Japanese. We know for sure that the Japanese are not going to fight for the liberation of India but only for the liquidation of Britain's colonialism in East and the Far East. We expect no foreign country to shore up our power or position except that war between these foreign powers affords us a swell chance to get rid of one by the other.

I: But we can't fly on borrowed plumes.

Spy: Yes, but we would welcome the Japanese help for a flight to a certain height only. Thereafter, it would be weightlessness away from the gravitational pull of slave-hungry Britain. As a matter of fact, while in the Far East, I never knew that the revolution had already taken wing beyond capture. I came here as a sceptic but became a full convert soon after my arrival. We have had the potential to go up and forward without outside prop before long.

I: Won't the Japanese turn on India directly the British quit ? There is no vacuum in power and politics of a country unless the people are capable to fill it themselves.

Spy: No. The Japanese are a bit of colonists nearer home, no doubt, but never that far, never that big or that bad as Britain. An Independent India would be too impervious to prick. There would be no traditional vacuum for any outsider just to walk in.

I: You turned over valuable intelligence to a potential invader to replace one brand of colonialism by another.

Spy: True ; but we have our ropes and hopes with one and with the other none. I have seen much of the East. I have seen its worst. Oriental colonialism has never been so greedy and grabbing as the occidental. It is difficult to achieve detente between East and West. The Japanese are interested in trade with an independent India more than in its vast territory in a free world.

(He paid fulsome tribute to the Japanese).

I: Why make a fetish of East and West ? Both the Japanese and the British are colonial powers, one is Eastern tweedledum and the other Western tweedledee. Why did you turn a spy for one against the other?

Spy : It was my sense of patriotism which had actuated me to play the role of a spy, as otherwise the British have not killed my father ; they are sucking the very blood of the entire nation. India is a country after my heart, my homeland, my holy land. For the Japanese or for myself. I would have never done it. I turned spy to do my bit to serve and save our slave country from the capitalist captors.

I : But you have been working for the Japanese ! You seem to be driving the British by the front-door and letting in the Japanese by the backdoor.

Spy : No, the intention has been, as it is, to throw out the British with our own resources, or, if necessary, with outside help. A soldiering family as I am, I believe in fighting one evil with another so that both exhausted each other, making room for patriots to emerge with flying colours. Our relations with the Japanese have been none-too happy or none of the best. They take us for professional mercenaries fighting battles for the British without realising that this has helped prolong our subjugation of India. The British set one community upon another to commit bloodshed. They have now reached their watershed.

Deshbhagats look askance at the Japanese no less. We hold the view that Germany, Japan or whoever comes will satellise India. What the Japanese have done in China and the British in India are carbon copies of each other. We do not want the Japanese as successor imperialists to the British. In the final analysis, it is our war against foreign domination of every denomination : whether it is Britain or Japan should be immaterial. It is we who win it or lose it. We are fighting to acquire the right of making our own history. We want "to be ourselves" without outsiders.

We are an indigenous movement, a purely Indian insurrection without any foreign inspiration. We are not for any foreigner. We only want an under-the-cover support from one foreign power against another. We are soldiers of the soil, fighting for the soil. It would be we, not any foreign power, who would be the heir of the British in India. We don't bank solely on any external power beyond seeking an auxiliary aid to defeat and drop the old imported stuff. We know perfectly well that invasions from abroad and subversions from within will continue so long as India is ruled by foreigners of one stamp or another. For the present, however, the

mere fact that the public is against the British. though not in favour of the Japanese, would be sufficiently helpful to the Japanese in their intended invasion of India. In my view, the Japanese invasion of India would galvanise even dormant parties into activity. Moreover, the public feels that though any foreign rule is as bad as that of the British, yet the Japanese, to choose the lesser evil, are all Asiatics. The people view the present struggle for supremacy in India as between the Orient and the Occident. We have the nerve and verve to seize power from the foreign rulers. And yet we would welcome any assistance from a friendly power to accelerate the seizure from a friendly enemy. It is a question of getting assistance from one against the other and certainly not of making a choice between one foreigner and the other or better the devil you know than the devil you don't know.

I : If you really meant business to serve and save the country, why didn't you work in collaboration with the fighters for freedom under the aegis of the Indian National Congress and other political organisations fighting for freedom ?

Spy : I did not trust anybody outside my ring. I trusted only one man. Giani Sewa Singh, and he brought the wolf to my door !

(Unlike the Giani's description of Ajaib Singh's intelligence at school, I now found him extremely clever and composed, always trying to play it cool after the initial halloo-ballyhoo. He was now calm, his jaw set).

I : If you did not collaborate with anybody outside your confidants, did you contact any politician or leader working for the same end as you ?

Spy : I broke my journey at Delhi to see Gandhiji. I sat at his feet at two of his prayer meetings and immersed myself in his philosophy in action for some time but then veered away from it as it was excruciatingly slow and too long range a policy to promise quick results.

Gandhiji is a frail old man with a tough mind, a man of peace, a brilliant beacon and helmsman, with uncommon resource and resilience, a man for all seasons, an unflappable and compelling personality who, armed with a mandate of the people, leads them by following them. He has always demonstrated an infinite fine and skill in leadership. His entire career has always had its roller-coaster flavour, a goodly pattern for us all. He

turned the first symbolic spade for independence and the nation followed.

Gandhiji is a veteran of jails. He is solicitous of the poor, a man of the people and always among the people. He is a star attraction, the Alpha and Omega of the liberation movement. He has a winsome weapon of mesmeric personality for the highest and the humblest. Expectant and welcoming crowds, gay with flags and flowers, throng the streets waiting for him. He makes swell speeches. It is a spectacle of thrills and spills wherever he goes. Massive and high-powered audience hear him in a reverent hush. Whatever he says goes with the people. Every single word uttered by him siezes upon them. His speeches have created a ferment of unrest. He gives the lesson of the past and the hope for the future. The people have closed their ranks behind him. All the political parties have drawn around him. He is their compromise choice. He is the doyen of leaders. No other leader has more going for us. The people swear by him. In him you find a leader who is you in a better edition. He believes in a pluralist society of all faiths and denominations. He is father and brother to every down-trodden little guy, nay, to the whole nation : Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike. He is a miracle man, a political wizard for Hindu-Muslim unity. We desperately need his kind. With him at the apex, the Congress is all powerful and has everything—man-power, brain-power and money.

He is unassuming, always dressed in a loin-cloth, sitting on a white pallet open to the elements. He conceals nothing, neither his mind nor his body. He abjures bungalows for huts. What a wonderous scene it is to see a naked man, as he is, accorded fabulous ticker-tape welcomes and accolades by all the political parties. The Press pays him editorial tributes.

The Gandhian ghost stalks the British. He is bossing the British bosses. He has set the Thames on fire. Most elaborate arrangement made by the Government at places visited by him show the extent to which the authorities are keeping their fingers crossed. The British wrongly allege that he has built a cult of his own personality. They unfairly traduce him and accuse him of spiritual blackmail.

I : Did you disclose your mission to Mr. Gandhi ?

Spy : No, he could not have liked anything inspired by foreigners.

I : Did you disclose your identity to him ?

Spy : No, it was not necessary.

I : Then what was your point in seeing him ?

Spy : To pay homage to that father-figure fighting for our freedom all his life. He is the custodian of our hopes and aspirations. The people have an impeccable confidence in him. The Congress took birth in his log-cabin and has come up a long way under his care.

(This was how he gave effusive compliments to Mr. Gandhi).

(Nobody could visualise at that moment that the very people who swore by Mr. Gandhi, who always greeted each other by invoking his name "Jai Gandhiji (Hail Gandhi) and who got independence because of his major efforts, would soon cut him to size and relegate him to the lumber-room as an anachronism, a redundant relic of the not-too-distant past.

India was granted independence and partitioned into Bharat and Pakistan in August, 1947. The grateful Bharti nation requitted their benefactor too soon. Mr. Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948. He was conducting his usual public prayers when a gang of four slayers, Nathuram Godse, Narayan Apte, Gopal Godse and Vishnu Karkare, shot him dead. Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte were sentenced to death and the other two to life imprisonments.

The tragedy was hightened still further. One of the assassins, Nathuram Godse, soon began to be worshipped as a "martyr" at his death anniversaries celebrated at Poona. Among his worshippers are the followers of his cut-throat cult and leaders of the Rashtria Sewak Sangh, a militant Hindu organisation. Hundreds of men and women, including the two life-convicts, since released, are on record offering pooja to his photograph hung decoratively in an outline of "undivided India".

"The Times of India" quoted a Mr. G. V. Katkar, Editor of "Turan Bharat" as saying that he had conveyed Nathuram Godse's intention to kill Mr. Gandhi to Mr. B. G. Kher, the then Chief Minister of Bombay, through a Mr. Balukaka Nanikar, long before the assassination. What a pity. The Hindu Government and the Hindu nation, who now worship Mr. Gandhi, not only did nothing to prevent his murder but acquiesced, as they do, in the worship of his assassin.

Mr. Gandhi fell to the bullets of Hindu fanatics spoiling for an "undivided India.".

Frailty, thy name is political fanaticism. No wonder if Mr. Gandhi, like Ceasar, was heard crying :

You too, Hindu Brutes,—then fall, Gandhi !

Liberty ! Freedom ! Tyranny is dead !

But was Mr. Gandhi a tyranny ? No, certainly not to the Hindus. He was for them and with them all the way.

Was Mr. Gandhi opposed to Liberty or Freedom? No, certainly not. He fought for it, lived for it and died for it for the Hindus. He was all out for the Hindus, fought for them, fell for them and by them.)

Was Mr. Gandhi opposed to "undivided India"? No, certainly not. He fought for it and died because of it. Like all other Hindus, he was for "Hindi", Hindu and Akhand Hindustan !" This would be evident from his own speeches, writings, talks and correspondence with the British Government and political leaders And yet he was murdered by his own people. Why ?—a victim of misunderstanding, indeed.)

I : Isn't it a fact that Muslims and Sikhs, as also other minorities, have every reason to fear Ram Raj in place of Tom Raj in an independent India ? The curse of Caste System would corrode and cancel religious freedom. As you know, caste comes with birth. The Caste System is a pedigree pyramid with the Brahman at the apex and the dark-skinned indigene. Dravidian at the bottom. How will the leaders resuscitate the social regimentation of caste Hindus ? The defensive aggressiveness of Hindus during the Mughal period provoked an unbridgeable untouchability between them and the Muslims. Caste and communalism constitute a perennial source of running dispute between the various sects. The tension will not be eased for generations. The deep pathological hatred which has persisted for centuries will not die out for decades. Freedom from the whiteman would be replaced by our thraldom by the iron Caste System. Leaders of various communities and minorities would prefer independent Balkans to an Akhand Hindustan ridden by the callous Caste System when British India reverts to Indian India. The Hindus won't tolerate anything other than their most trumpetted and much covetted ambition "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan". The Jang Sangh and the R. S. S.

who are among the most rabid Hindu revivalists and terrorists want to see only Hindus with Hindi as their lingua franca in an independent Hindustan.

Spy : I agree throughout. It is why Gandhiji is against individious distinctions and presumptuous monopoly claimed by the Caste System. He is for Harijans (untouchables). He is wiping out communal prejudices. His prayer provides proof of the pudding. It is attended by Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and believers of all faiths alike. All is grist that comes to his mill. Everything he says—and he says plenty—goes. He is a man of huge capacities and capabilities. He is a man of the masses. He goes to the masses of every creed. The masses go to him for a lead.

I : Mr. Gandhi's prayer is his neo-politics. Basically, Mr. Gandhi is a Hindu first, last and all the time. To quote Mr. Gandhi himself :

"The Hindu mind is myself . . . . . . Every fibre of my being is Hindu. . . . . .".

Mr. Gandhi is a Hindu in his own right. He is a Hindu by birth. Nobody should grudge it. But he is bitterly anti-Muslim. To him, the Muslim majority in certain provinces is only a census figure and that too constitutes just a shade over fifty per cent. He is not prepared to accept Muslims as Muslims even by name in an Independent India. His writings reek of racial prejudice. Nothing could be more biting and bitter, nothing could be more authentic of this vitriolic prejudice than what he himself wrote in an article in his own paper "Young India" as follows :—

"Muslims are the progeny of Arab invaders or persons separated from us. If we wish to maintain our prestige there are three remedies :—

(1) They should be weaned away from Islam and brought back to their old Dharama (Hinduism).

(2) If that is not possible, they should be returned to their ancestral land (Arabia) : and

(3) If even this is difficult, they should be kept as subjects in India".

All this is tantamount to saying : "Love us or leave us".

Spy : This is too bad to have come from Gandhiji.

(Butanti-Muslim prejudices worse than the foregoing came from Hindus of every description. Specific instances

can be quoted to bear this out. A solitary instance should be good enough, coming, as it does, from a high judicial authority :—

"A Brahman palmist who read my hand while I was studying in the B. A. Class said that I was a Brahman in my past birth and owing to the sins I had committed I was born a Mussalman."!

[Chief Justice Muhammad Shahabuddin.]

I : The Sikhs are a minority too small to get anything from the major community of Hindus in the Congress. Wouldn't they be swamped in a big State ?

Spy : They Sikhs are not oblivious of the octapus of Hindu domination but, for sure, they are a martial race, strong enough to wring their pound of flesh out of the Kali's claws, the unwilling hands of the Hindus. Though one swallow does not make a summer, the Sikhs do. They are a small compact community where every Smith knows every Jones. They can defy Congress domination and Hindu absorption.

Veteran Sikh leaders and a large number of their followers are rotting in jails. They stand to gain by the strength of their contribution to the movement. They have suffered executions. We adore Bhagat Singh, the famous national hero of fifteen years go. It cannot be that the Sikhs should have "all the kicks but none of the half pence". He who pays the piper, calls the tune. It is the Sikhs who have paid the piper with their blood more than anybody else and it should be they to have the right to call the tune. In case such a right is denied to us, we have given our swords a temper of poison to force our tune on deaf ears. We won't act as marionettes and allow any grab-all-party to rule the roost. The British, too, won't let the minorities stew. They invariably encourage minority intransigence in a tie.

The Sikhs pine for the wonderful and proud days back in the 1840s when Maharaja Ranjit Singh held sway over the Punjab. But deshbhagats do not believe in communalism, regionalism. or provincialism. They are cosmopolitans, every bit humanitarians, who, like gold, have no narrow nationality.

I : Are you aware that the Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University, Pandit Malaviya, accorded a cordial reception to the Prince of Wales when he came to India in 1922 (?) and conferred on him an

honorary doctorate at a time when students of the Aligarh Muslim University observed a strike against the British Government with the result that the authorities had to close the institution for a month ? This was at a time when the Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, was anxious that the Prince of Wales should be spared any hostile demonstrations and boycott of his visit to India, promising full Provincial Autonomy and a measure of Dyarchy at the Centre.

Spy : No, I am not aware of this.

I : Are you aware that Mr. Gandhi, a one-time miracle man for Hindu-Muslim unity, was alleged to have had tet-a-tet interviews with several Viceroys of India and played into their hands so much that even a prominent Congress leader of Bombay, Mr. Kanji Dwarka Das, roundly condemned him publicly to have down-graded himself into a playback politician destroying that unity :—

"His (Mr. Gandhi's) betrayal of his colleagues, the Ali Brothers after his six meetings with the Viceroy (Lord Reading) in Simla in May (1921) infuriated not only Gandhiji's powerful colleagues and friends like Moti Lal Nehru and C. R. Dass but also created revulsion against Gandhiji among the general public."

Again, Mr. Gandhi's backyard meetings with another Viceroy, Lord Irwin, from February 17 to March 5, 1931, resulting in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, harmed the communal harmony still further. He infected the Hindu community with the cult of Hindu domination.

All these backstage parleys of Mr. Gandhi posing as the only Mr. India with the various Heads of the British Government in India sowed the seeds of suspicion that Mr. Gandhi was trying to advance himself and the Hindu cause at the expense of other communities. He always mentioned only one person—himself. We do not find even a tittle in his subsequent speeches and writings to dispel the evergrowing suspicion and consequent parting of the ways between the two major communities of India.

Letters published even in pro-Government and pro-Congress papers, like The Civil & Militery Gazette and The Tribune of Lahore, sharply criticised the propriety of the secret sessions between Mr. Gandhi as the sole representative of the predominantly Hindu-

Congress and the Heads of His Majesty's Government in India by asking :—

"Why these Monkey-Meetings !"

"Why this British-Bania Coupling !"

"The British Breed Banias".

"Whither Hindu-Muslim Unity ?"

"Why destroy in a matter of days what had been cemented during the last three decades ?"

It was against this background that from now onwards Mr. Jinnah, a politician above politics, would not let Mr. Gandhi and the British Viceroys dispose as they proposed. He would not let Mr. Gandhi pose as the only pet-cock with the sole right to crow on a divided dunghill. The Muslims felt harnessed to a wrong chariot. They became diffident of entrusting India's fate to a single man or a single community and ceased to accord carnival welcomes to Mr. Gandhi and other Hindu leaders any more. The Congress and the Muslim League are in a constrained partnership ; nay the marriage of convenience between them has almost ended. What was once a real Hindu-Muslim unity is now a mere ramshackle agglomeration.

Spy : I do not know. It may be that Gandhiji made friendship with the wolf but kept his axe ready, not to harm other communities but, to help the cause of the country as a whole.

I: Are you aware how Mr. Gandhi wrecked an opportunity for Hindu-Muslim unity at the Round Table Conference held in London in September 1931 ? Mr. Gandhi, accompanied by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, saw His Highness The Agha Khan at his Ritz Hotel suite in London to have informal talks on the Hindu-Muslim question on the eve of the Conference. The Agha Khan, in his Memoirs, narrates how the conversation started. He says that he pointed out to Mr. Gandhi that were he now to show himself a real father to India's Muslims, they would respond by helping him to the utmost of their ability, in his struggle for India's independence. Mr. Gandhi's reply again showed him, not a compromise but, a communal leader :—

"I cannot in truth say that I have any feeling of paternal love for Muslims. But if you put the matter on grounds of political necessity, I am ready to discuss it in a co-operative spirit. I cannot indulge in any form of sentiment."

This was, says the Agha Khan, "a cold douche" from the outset and its chilly effect was felt throughout the rest of the conversation.

Mr. Kanji Dawarka Das, referred to in the foregoing, comments on Mr. Gandhi's failure to live up to his claim as a common leader as follows :

> "The communal and Depressed Classes problems would have been settled in London at the Round Table Conference but Gandhiji was under the influence of Hindu communalists—Pandit Malaviya, Jayakar and G. D. Birla."

A Mr. Edward Thompson, in his letter to Mr. Jawahar Lal Nehru dated December 6, 1936, severely criticised Mr. Gandhi as follows :—

> "I never thought Gandhi wrong until the Round Table Conference when he was both arrogant and irrelevant. Perhaps, he should not have come at all. But, having come, he was unjustified in refusing to regard the other Indians. . . . . . as men entitled to be consulted by him and regarded as friends engaged in a common endeavour and hope."

The Conference failed for lack of compromise in Mr. Gandhi. He stuck to this attitude and pressed the one nation theory. But he couldn't get his way at the Table. This irked the representatives of Muslims. The British Prime Minister, Mr. MacDonald, too, was provoked by Mr. Gandhi's quibbling and play on words so much that he directly addressed him as follows :—

> "Be honest and face the facts. The communal problem is a problem of fact. Does the problem exist in India or does it not exist ? I do not answer. I leave you honestly to answer it for yourselves and to yourselves. . . . ."

All this is unfortunate but true. It is Hindu leadership which has wrecked the slender and slippery Hindu-Muslim unity, compelling Muslims to seek refuge in the two-nation theory in a vastly multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-statal country. The Congress attitude that he who is not with it is against it made the Muslim masses to support the theory solidly and stolidly. India is large enough to find both place and peace for the two nations. The catch-cry of religion in danger has further split the myth of one-nation into clashing cabals and cliques. The Muslims, therefore, demand a separate homeland, asking

the British : "Divide and depart". The Hindus may, if they like, still call Mr. Gandhi a man of the masses minus the Muslims and other dissenting non-Muslim minorities. To the minorities, all his geese are not swans.

Spy : I know nothing of what you attribute to Gandhiji and party.

(An article, which appeared in the Reader's Digest for October, 1969, page 65 under the caption "Gandhi: Apostle of Non-Violence", says, *inter alia*, that "Gandhi was not a simple man but complex and even devious when necessary").

I : Did you meet any other politician?

Spy : No. On one of my visits to Gandhiji; I just passed by Maulana Azad. He came when I was leaving Gandhiji.

I : Any other leader?

Spy : None. I know Jinnah Sahib, Pandit Nehru, Patel and Master Tara Singh from hearsay. Jinnah Sahib is known for his great poise and personality, staunch principles and unimpeachable probity. He is said to be a rare combination of an eminent lawyer, a talented politician and a statesman, a devastating debator, a constitutional fighter and an incorruptible leader. He speaks impeccable English and keeps friends and foes spellbound with his tongue and truth. He is too honest to deceive anybody and too shrewd to be deceived by anybody. The people are inspired by the ethos of his straight conduct. He has few but mighty words. His whole life, like Gandhiji, is a saga of freedom. The British have met their Moses in Gandhiji and Jinnah Sahib.

Pandit Nehru was born into politics, a prodigal son of the soil, talented and tactful, endowed with great imgination and idealism. They say Patel Sahib is the strongman of the Congress and Master Tara Singh that of the Sikh community.

All these leaders are a tremendous asset to us. They are extremely charismatic and resilient, a talented team of politicians, a gifted galaxy of statesmen. The whole career of these political Goliaths and Gullivers has been an uphill grind. They live politics. They practise pure politics. The country has had plenty resources of character and initiative.

I : Certain critics say that Mr. Nehru is a split personality—half Communist and half imperialist. He hunts with the hound and runs with the hare.

Spy : Politics is a game of chance. One should always see both right and left, Pandit Nehru sways both ways, a patriotic capitalist, a neo-Communist-*cum*-Capitalist.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

I : You know singularly little of the full picture. You must face facts firmly. You can't build a nation with shoddy material overnight. Though a geographical unit, India has never been a political entity except under conquerors. Your organisation is not even marginally better than the mushroom splinters.

Spy : We know it all : We also know the intrinsic value of the local and foreign gold. The one is too pure to rust and the other too dross to deceive. We know one from the other. We have made contacts at all levels from Gandhiji downwards.

I : Whatever your wishful optimism, we can't get independence in the face of the manifold split in the political parties. It is a hard road to national unity. Co-operation between the parties is blighted by mutual suspicion. There is not a flicker of sign that they will compromise. On the contrary, there are separatist and dissident movements and mutually antagonistic groups, a clear polarisation between them.

Spy : We believe in a multi-party polity, a federal unity. We have both temperate and tempestuous leaders to meet all sorts of climate. The British capitalize on the failings of our leaders. Some of the leaders are certainly an assortment of British stooges. It is they who work confusion in our ranks. But Gandhiji is the linchpin of the diverse people and politicians living in our vast country. He stands peer to the versatile Churchill, a saving grace of the ensuing new India.

I : Yes, but leadership and rank and file are divided, belting, as they do, in various directions. The necessary unity and strength to pull the bear's tail are woefully lacking. The people have held their breath far too long, waiting to see how and when the politicians would take their destiny to destination. Most of the leaders make a babel of contending rantings in their searing and marathon speeches. The people know it too well that

they are dissonant in their principles and practices, playing parlour tricks against each other.

Spy : We are not unaware that we have politicians but few patriots. The situation is alarmingly dominated by a rump of plutocrats and parish-pump politicians. Quite a few of them are low-profile truants who seldom stay the course. They spoil for lust and lucre and chairs and cheers. To them, politics and Governments are twin industries in which Shylocks make money in and out of office on one plea or another. Gandhis, Jinnahs and Nehrus are a rarity. All great men are unscrupulous, goes a vulgar saying. They are not. Possessing, as they do, unimpeachable character and integrity and unblemished record and reputation both as politicians and statesmen, they are the cynosure of all eyes.

"There are two kinds of leaders in the world—some are interested in the fleece, others in the flock."

Harry Truman, a former President of United States, was talking politics with a group of Yale students when an earnest youth among them asked him "How do I start in politics, Sir?

"You've already started. You're spending somebody else's money, aren't you?" came the quick reply.

I : Yes, it is why our people are appalled by a flaccid handling of the political situation by seasonal speculators who spoil for chairs without turning a hair. The people are poor and simple and admire any leader who promises to singe Uncle Tom's beard or tweak a toady's nose: Demagogues and charlatans have confused and corrupted the movement still further. They have swelled the number of contenders for the leadership of the people. Acrimonious exchanges are going on between them. Disputes and differences flare up into fights. Any coalition between the contending parties would be too neat and tidy to last long. To me, the attainment of freedom seems a fantasy.

Spy : No, it is certainly not that hopeless. Even if it is, deshbhagats are a thunderous exception. The people endorse us. We are trying to bone up the opposite parties. The rival parties, though divided on certain controversial issues, are united against the British. Most of the leaders are virtuous and only a very few are the exact opposite. Again, most of them were social lions before taking to politics. A united people under these

leaders can tweak the nose of any Government, however powerful. The British won't be able to ride their hobby horse of divide and rule any more. The trend is already set for a British disengagement.

I: But all the political parties have diverse ideologies. They are at odds, too much fragmented. The Congress too is a riven party, split down the middle on the issue of separate electorate for the minorities. The vehemence of opposition from the Muslim League has weakened it still further. Any semblance of unity is hardly more than a surface alliance of convenience with deep fissures gaping within. These fissures cannot be bridged by any make-shift alliance. The uneasy coalition between conflicting parties can't last long. Inwardly, considerable tug and drag is going on between them. We are certainly not one people, much less one nation, with one destiny. In the result, the movement exists in a very attenuated form.

Spy: It is bad but not that bad. The relations between the various parties are mellowing and barriers coming down. Patriotic sentiments provide the warp and woof of the political unity. The hiatus between them, wherever it exists, can't hamper our cause. With all the visible differences. the parties are linked with each other as lips and teeth, sharing each other's woes and weals and storms and stresses. It is the earnest yearning of all the parties to sink their differences and swim together. They know that it is upto them to make or mar the movement. They know that it is the British who thrive on our dissensions and that it is why they always seek out devices that divide us and deepen the differences. It is the British who erode our unity and play factions off against one another. Our detractors also have found it a fine opportunity to poach in. It is hard to work lackeys. You know chronic lackeys take time to correct, particularly when all the political parties are infiltrated by fifth columnists. We are stoic about our critics and watchful about cells. It is only Anglicised Indians raised in English schools who disparage us. Their criticism is nothing but ignorant twaddle. Though we are few, our quality makes up for our fewness. It is in degree, not in kind, that we stand out from the masses. We enjoy the support and sympathies of the masses in the thousands. "We are divided", they say. "But who divided us"? They.

I: You say that it is the British who have divided us. But Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who is no friend to the British, said to the British at one of the Round Table Conferences held in London in the early thirties:—

"It is the old maxim of 'divide and rule' but *we* divide and you rule."

Why should the British agree with us when we do not agree among ourselves due to the "Devil of Division" fed by Indians railing against Indians?

Spy: We have one geopraphy and one history. It is the British who wrench us apart.

I: No, we have never had one history. Unless history is one, the apparent one paysical geography can never be the real one. Both physical geography and history follow political geography and not *vice versa.*

Spy: True. We have been a divided house due to internal dissensions. But we hope to achieve triumph of togetherness presently.

I: Your dream of an early departure of the British is utopian. You can't trick and flick them out of the country. It would be foolhardy for them to transfer power to the uninitiated in a fiercely diverse country where rival parties out-shout each other.

Spy: What you say is simply not correct but a crisis in self-confidence. The masses and the leaders are strongly politicised.

I: The people look askance at your youthful prank. The whole rationale of the movement is misconceived. It is why the struggle is going too badly. The differences and divisions between the parties have thrown the movement into disarray. Cracks have become rifts. You are heading into an invisible future, taking punches in an unequal battle with a super-power. Why ride a high horse and stir up a storm? You better discard your illusions today than be disillusioned tomorrow.

Spy: Your logic is lopsided. Over the years, it has happened many a time when a handful of picked patriots, who showed a cavalier disregard for law, did wonders. Our comrades, too, have raged at the law with great impunity in the face of manifold handicaps. Deshbhagats won't sit back in the changing and challenging world of today. They will never scale down the target set by them. The British have few

cards left to play against us. They can't face us. An empty sack cannot stand up straight. They are faced with an agonising choice; inglorious death or disgraceful departure. We have nettled them with our manoeuvres.

I: Many splinter groups have left the Congress and are now in competition to lead the movement.

Spy: Defectors detract nothing from our cause. In spite of fissiperous efforts at fragmentation, the country would stay together to be a viable state. We will rescue the people from the political quicksands and awaken them to their perils. The carryover would no longer be slavery. We will succeed in spite of plural politics, differing cultures, conflicting aspirations and many religions. We are fighting for the supreme right of what every person may have under the law. We know that an impeccable character is destiny. We will fuse and galvanise our people into a nation. Whatever the political partles say or do, the masses are homogeneous without any cleavege. We are putting our collective foot down and forging a united front. Now more than ever is the need for unity. Unless we are united, the idea of independence would continue to simmer.

I: We are a fragile country. The leaders are divided and undecided. Political life has frayed as accusations fly back and forth between the various parties. The politicians are riven by internecine strife and intractable differences. Indians are taking a side swipe at Indians themselves. The political parties do not even put up the facade of unity. Our homeland is a hive of hate. It will take quite some time for the mud to settle.

Spy: No. Our leaders are equipped with diversified knowledge. They have brought about unity in diversity. Sometimes, differences nourish solidarity and diversity unity. The periodic polarisation between the Congress and the Muslim League is disappearing. The differences between the various parties are not organic nor of essence but of name and style only. The parties of all persuasions have now had some working relationship between themselves. By all accounts, the relations between the parties are on the mend. This is because the huge task before the country underscores the need for unity.

I: Nothing warrants your optimism that the bad relations between the praties are on the mend, much less on

the end. The parties are traditional enemies, riven by fundamental dissensions and disputes and factions and feuds. They indulge in intrigues and dog fights against one another. India has become an arena of feuding parties. The matter riles us every day. Who will make peace between them?

Spy: The Congress is the peace-maker. It has broken up most of the fights and kept the parties in line. It has leapt the barriers of distance. It rules the roost without doubt. It is phenomenally popular. It is the prime example of national unity. All the essential politicians are with the Congress. As between the various parties, deshbhagats have chosen the Congress and broken with others.

I: "The Congress is of course a bourgeois organisation", wrote Mr. Nehru in his letter to Lord Lothian in January, 1936. It is an upper crust party scarred with cracks, a shaky union without unity. It suffers from an embarrassment of riches in too many leaders. Moreover, it is too much pre-occupied with its taut relations with the Muslim League to risk an open conflict with the Government. The talk between the Congress and the Muslim League is nothing but a dialogue of the deaf. This is so because the Congress has offered no nostrum to satisfy the Muslim League. The Congress and the Muslim League are the two titans in the political field. None of them can afford to do without the other. The Muslim and the other minority parties have dissipated their loyalties to the Congress. There are at present about a dozen liberation parties of any description. While the Congress is opposed to the British imperialism, all the minority parties are opposed to the Congress chauvinism. The Congress has more forms than substance. Princely cars flying pennants emblazoned with the letters "AIC" (All India Congress) adorn the houses of the top brass.

Spy: But the Congress is none the worse for it. It may not be half as national as it claims to be but it is the only national organisation worth the name weve got. Let them call an election. Let the rival parties put up their men for the Central and Provincial Assemblies. The ballot-box will refuse to oblige the pigmies. The people will vote en masse for the Congress which will certainly sweep the board, winning all the seats and sending other parties reeling. Its dynamic leaders are good vote-getters. Barring a few communalists and

communists, who are irresponsible hedonists, a dacadent and sadistic lot, everyone who is anyone, will vote Congress. Pro-Congress elements have already vaulted into power. The edict of the Congress is to invoke principles of justice and equality. The party line-up in the last elections showed Congress majority. The Government stalls independence by flirting with one political party or the other.

I: But Sikhs have only a handful of votes. The Muslim League alone would give the Congress a closer run.

Spy: The Sikhs have more voice than votes.

I: The country is divided in politics, race and religion. Factionalism has exacerbated tension. Extremism in communalism is running high. Violent clashes between various factions have roiled the streets in all big cities. Our people have never learnt to live together in perfect amity. Rabid communalists are making "rivers of blood" speeches. Mutual hatred has spawned communal riots. Never has the hatchet been buried between the main communities deeply. There is no identifiable leader among them capable of bringing them on one platform. It is why the British divide and rule a pluralistic India containing people of disparate religious beliefs.

Spy: The Congress weilds the bow. It is above communalism, factionalism, regionalism and tribalism. It is a representative organisation and has considerably reduced religious and racial riots, mutual hatred and prejudices. At one stage, it had completely identified itself with the aspirations of the Khilafat Movement. Gandhiji is the rallying pivot who can bind them together into a viable whole. He has the promise and potential to bring about reunion and renaissance.

I: Communalism is tearing at national unity and encouraging centrifugal forces. The miasma of mutual distrust can't be dispersed by mere talk.

Spy: Communalism can't gobble the big Congress. We do feel a bit of a strain but never the split. All communal moves are too little and too late. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are historic friends. All of us are co-subjects. If we falter or fall out, we fail. We can have a collective existence only. Whatever our diversity, we have a common destiny and a common identity.

I: No, any Muslim-and-Sikh compact with Hindus cannot last long. If it does, Hinduism will absorb Sikhism as it did Buddhism, Jainism and other sects and religions

born in India. Hinduism cannot absorb Islam, because Hindus and Muslims have different traditions, social life, moral attitudes, civilizations, cultures and religions. Islam has its roots outside India with an entirely different history and ideology. The Shylock mentality of the Hindus is wrecking everything. It is why politicians are divided on the sectarian issues.

Spy: Ne this is not the whole truth. All Indians are united in opposition. They live snugly side by side.

I: India is a country of violent contrasts. It is a fiercely diverse land riven by rivalries of race and religion. Politics alone is an empty jargon. It is race and religion which determine the politics of a party. Race and religion are more powerful than any amount of political chickanery. It is why it has never been possible for the country to be either all one thing or all the other. It is why it has never been an entity except under conquerors.

Moreover, it is almost impossible for the polyglot communities of India to pull together, sticking, as they do, to their varied languages with religious fanaticism. The Hindus always dragoon non-Hindu places of worship. The country is in the grip of the worst ever racial and communal riots. No political party, however big, has been able to do anything in the matter. The All India Congress, for all its name, is a communal body synonymous with dominant Hinduism. It is Hindu nationalism that has broken Hindu Muslim unity and left non-Hindus out in the cold. The Muslims have sampled Congress rule in the Muslim-minority provinces and suffered untold iniquities. They are now mortally afraid of Congress intentions. The scales have fallen from their eyes. It is why they have bolted the Congress and taken themselves out of the joint race. If Hindus want to live alone, why don't they leave others alone?

Spy: Yes, in such an event, only a third party could intervene and arrange the quarrels but that party, the British, helps itself by fanning fanaticism instead of finishing it. It is the British who set our people by the ear and stir up communal controversies.

I: Unfortunately India has specialised in one disgraceful industry more than most and that is communal riots. We are rich in raw material but communal riots are the only finished goods ready for export, plenty and to spare. We have been blighted with too much of this commodity.

Spy: But with all this, whatever the creaking and jolting on the surface, the basic movement is solidly national. All communal organisations have national orientation. They are working in close and cordial collaboration. There can't be a nation or nations within a nation.

I: It is not so much the basic national movement as the deep-seated communal prejudices that count. The various communal and political parties are going their several ways. India will never be able to become an integrated nation. Hindus and Muslims have diametrically conflicting cults and cultures. Hinduism gives religious sanction to what would be incest or criminal adultery in Islam and other religions of the world:—

"In Mahabharata we come across a Nayogi System. Under this system if a Hindu dies sonless his widow is to get a son from the brother of her deceased husband or some other near relative. This is considered as quite legitimate and is sanctioned by Shastras" (Page 23 of "Sex, Family Planning" by Dr. Anwar-ul-Haq).

Spy: All these predictions would turn out to be false directly the masterly wire-pulling by our foreign masters ceases. It is outside instigation that has been detracting from the prospective and potential integration of the various parties into a nation.

It is conceded that India has, more or less, a bit of everything; race and religion, caste and creed, nationalism and patriotism, communalism and sectarianism, provincialism and regionalism and socialism and communism. But we place patriotism above all these isms. It is the present need, not any creed, that is the key to unity.

Our country is ninety per cent village and there are no communal differences in the villages. Our people are rural and poor. In moments of common dangers, lesser frictions in cities, too, are forgotten. We are for a well-integrated and multi-racial society. We will do away with all the corrosive isms. We are sanguine that in spite of superficial divisions and differences, the country will stay in one piece. Together we will shape and share the destiny of our country. For this end in view, we extend and expect mutual respects. Our leaders are already making mammoth efforts that discordant voices stopped political hankering among themselves. We are sure that these parties would

refrain from going their separate ways and work, not in competition but, in co-operation with each other. The British always speculate on our schism which has invariably been our fundamental failing through the ages. They are here, not because they are strong but, because we are divided. It is time we came together as one people and one nation.

I: British India is now one solid state. It would be balkanised on independence. If not more, it would be two countries. Religious and racial riots will tear it up into corroding cogs of a rusty and rotten steam-roller toiling its weary way on a broken-and-bumpy and dark-and-dirty road beyond redemption.

Spy: No, I don't agree. It would be an Akhand Hindustan after independence.

A VOTARY OF VIOLENCE

I : Why do you glorify violence ? Why not play it cool ?

Spy : It is the British who always fire the first shot. It is they who have sown the wind and are now reaping the whirlwind. Those white faces are red in tooth and claw. We won't blink their cruelties. Shooting to kill has become a determinant of their policy in India. This was what the British brutes did in 1848-49 when they annexed the Punjab, the Sikh homeland. This was what they did in the Mutiny of 1857. They threshed about with insensate fury and resorted to frenzied killings. They massacreds thousand of Indians and cast them into collective graves. No human could be more inhuman.

These mad-hatters, these head-hunters and their hounds did their worst in the Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar on 13 April 1919 when Brigadier General Dyer lobbed 1650 rounds into a gathering of some fifty thousand (ten thousand ?) Indians killing as many as 2000 (337 ?) of them, besides wounding some 1500 in a matter of six minutes. The entire place was pock-marked with bullets. On top of this, they prosecuted 18 Indian leaders in the "Amritsar Leaders Case". It is they who are the architect of such sneak attacks. Other colonial powers, too, have committed blood-curdling cruelties but no brutality could have been more British.

Why can't crores of Indians commit crimes of honour and settle scores with the beleagured British when Dyer could mow down, without giving warning, such a large number of our innocent people with a handful of troops? Why can't scores of deshbhagats avenge themselves against the whiteman for bleeding the whole nation white when a single Udham Singh could shoot and kill, in England in 1940, Sir Michael O' Dwyer, Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab in 1919, for expressing approval of Dyer's dastardly act ? The murder of Sir Michael might not have counted for much. But, if nothing else, "one tyrant the fewer". Like Dyer and O' Dwyer, the British are indulging in an orgy of killing and acting Lloyed George's maxim "Never explain, never apologise".

The tragedy sowed the wind and the British have to reap the whirlwind. It was shocking for the Indians and shameful for the British. The whole country was, as it is, in mourning. The killings could not have come at a worst time of the agitation against the Rowlatt Act. The people have gone for the Act, tooth and nail.

This monstrous tyranny was followed by a ghastly murder of Lala Lajpat Rai, a prominent Congress leader, as a result of the Police lathi-charge at the Lahore Railway Station in the late twenties. Grieving multitudes stood along the funeral route. The British had already killed the soul of our people and spared the body. This by itself was bad as it is not as much to kill a man as his soul and spirit, his nature and morality. The Jallianwala holocaust in Amritsar and the murder of Lala Lajpat Rai at Lahore showed that the British are after the blood and body of our people no less than the soul.

The massive massacres committed by these imbecile brutes in the likeness of men spawned a nationwide prodigious pother for retaliation. "Blood for blood and we shall avenge our honoured dead" was the outburst throughout the country. Madcaps turned back the bloodsoaked incident at several places. Bhagat Singh and Dutt were among the deshbhagats who, armed with bombs and bullets, sought out Englishmen for grudge killings. The well-known Saunders Murder Case was the result of this frenzy. These daring deshbhagats declined the Government offer for pardon provided they tendered apology, saying they wanted to show their countrymen and the colonists, not how to defend themselves but, how to die for their desh (country).

Funerals fetch freedom. We have political funerals every day. We have mass graves ; sometimes ten to twenty bodies to a grave. Freedom is certainly on its way. We need just one thousand dead on either side to win independence. The more the sacrifices, the speedier the success. The spirit of Bhagat Singh and Dutt and other martyrs influences us from beyond the graves. Therefore, we too will give the British the peace of the grave. For our part, we won't have peace the British way. It is a lifeless peace we have. They are sucking our blood. It is why the Congress has split violently with the Government. Why should a people coming from a ferociously democratic country lord over us as despots and use their military and economic leverage to constrain us to stop the movement? Our condition for full freedom is immutable.

The British have kept up their Jallianwala grisly business, putting premium on the law of the jungle with barbarous bullets and blood-spattered bayonets. Dyer was typical of thousands of callous Britishers still sitting at our throats, ruling by terror and punishing for a most trivial error. We have suffered the tortures of hell and lived with the worst situations of violence in the hope that they would learn the lesson of history. It is only as a last resort that we have taken the issue to the streets. Now they can't stand up to the tough fight we are giving them. We wish them death. We give them death. A killer is a heartless coward, always feeling uneasy. The British wear funeral looks. They have now begun to realise that to sow violence is not as difficult as to reap. We are sure to throw them from their perch and make them struggle home through the war-weary high seas.

Though public memory is tragically short, the Jallianwala grisly blood-bath still rankles. It continues to fire the conscience of the people and strain the situation. Its overtones echo and evoke mob fury and frenzy. The memory of the martyrs is all the more heavy on us.

This is a fight to the death. We too will die martyrs to meet the myriad martyrs who blazed the trail for us. We are constant to our comrades in life and in death. Martyrs, like matter, are indestructible, unbeatable and formidable in death more than before. Dust to dust. Caesar dies. Caesarism lives. As they say, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Political martyrs are more alive than any of the living beings.

Bullets and bayonets cannot snuff out the spirit and spark of freedom. We never mince at a rattle of guns. We spike these guns. The British should remember Napoleon's wise saying "You can do anything with bayonets except sit on them". All oppression creates a state of war.

I : You say Mr. Gandhi has always been your constant admiration. Everybody admires his non-violence but nobody acts it. He is violently opposed to violence.

Spy : Yes, Gandhiji is violently opposed to violence. Well, it is violence after all, in one form or another! Gandhiji's attempted fasts unto death are exercises in self-mortification and violence.

I : But how do you reconcile your cult of violence with your faith in Mr. Gandhi's leadership, preaching non-violence ? Why don't you observe non-violence to meet the British violence like Mr. Gandhi does ?

Spy : We are, like Gandhiji, too good for the British to be violent. It is a safe bet that, violence or no violence, they will go. But, as I have said earlier, it is the British who always fire the first shot. It is they who have put up a bellicose junket around us. It is they who have committed gory excesses and moral and social vandalism by the violent dichotomy of their thought and action. Like Satan rebuking sin, they always first commit violence and then condemn violence. They do it and then say that they have merely taken holding action. They misunderstand us and mishandle us. They have always offended us and never befriended us. The aggression perpetrated by them is never content with one bite. They revel in slaughter. Terror and torture are commonplace. The record of their heady pleasures of violence, carnage and cruelties, is distinctly bad and staggers the notorious Neros' imagination. It is they who have poked their fingers in the hornets' nest, touching off a crisis and a catastrophe. As observed by a sage, in their decline, tyrannies tilt at windmills and Neros do not lack reasons for losing their heads. They have damaged and demeaned their own image themselves.

We can only beg or revolt. We have been begging too long. The bowl has always been empty. Therefore, we have ceased to prate about non-violence, constrained, as we are, to contain their violence by our violence. They have provoked a blood-letting in the country. Everybody is repining about their atrocities. The white misdeeds have provoked an accumulated resentment,

Moderates have been submerged by extremists. We have no alternative to fight it out in the field. They have deployed their entire force against patriots. Our violence is the fall-out from their violence. The fever of violent retaliation burns fiercest. We will do the same to them in their homes. Why wink at their carnage? Why forgive them when they know what they do and see peril to them in their own blunders ? Unless we are dead in the flesh or in the spirit, we can save our lives only by losing them. We'll no longer offer our cheek to the smiter. We refuse to die like we came into the world—non-violent slaves.

This is our desh. We are all out for our desh or death. The motherland needs our blood and sweat. Sacrifice is an essential component in the making of a nation. We know we won't get independence on the cheap. We know we won't get it on the platter. We kill to live. We die to live. We can't survive unless we have the killer's instinct. It is time we drove the wolf away from the depleted fold. We deal in death to tyrants. A tyrant is invariably timid and a moral poltroon. He recoils from death. The British know we are closing in for the kill. It is time they left the country in the flesh. We are dedicated deshbhagats, heroes of the hour, a set of brave men, each worth ten. We have no date of death. We know our dates of birth, no dates of death. We have no black-legs, no wobblers, no faint-hearts, no quizlings and no Mir Jafars among us. We have workers, no shirkers, no Rip Van Winkles. We are in the throes of a peak period. We will survive all stresses and strains. The movement is dipping, swaying and surging almost simultaneously. Our resilience is incorrigible even if it is to be a long drawn struggle of attrition. We do not quail before death. Death holds us no terror. We are a redoubtable side with indomitable spirits. We venture body and soul to win freedom. Our party is the local equivalent of the brave Japanese.

We are fixed in our resolve. We are itching for a kill. We'll do or die and never despair. They rule by death. They'll go by death. We'll kill them and be killed. The dread of their dead and the dread of our dead will frighten them out of the country. People die for an idea. We die for an ideal. This is no easy boast. We will stand to test of time. We'll give our lives but not our livestock. Death, danger or despair can't deter

us. Death is the foundation on which our struggle stands. We are all set for it, ready to go through fire and water. We have taken our fate into our own hands. The field has been cleared for a final battle. We will do or die in the last ditch and beat them to the punch for sure. They shall have to give us liberty or give us death. The heat is on and we will certainly make it. We won't flinch or flush. We will never die a wretched death. We have moral health and martial vigour, the dare to die right off. We will prove what we profess to be. We say things which need to be said and do things which need to be done.

We have yet to reveal our full hand. With all their cruelties, they have already found us hard-liners. We know their Dutch courage. We have seen their soldiers shedding their uniforms like rabble and taking flight. We have measured them in scuffles and skirmishes. We are going to get even with them in the face of flying bullets. The country has its fate over a barrel. We will have no gains without guns. Whatever the hazards and hurdles and whatever the pains and penalties, we will do it and face upto them and go through with them. We are not fatalists nor fanatics but devoted fighters.

It is an eventful period. We have braced ourselves to our duties. We are deshbhagats. Yes, but what is in a label ? We believe in unsung service. We can swap our labels and serve as Sewa Samitis—volunteers doing free service. Patriotism is a thankless but never a fruitless pursuit. We are really blooded for patriotism. We are honest to God and the country. We are proud of being what we are, a potent organisation. We have set ourselves. Our stature is expanding. Though we started a mere seven months ago, we have loosened the seams of our oppressors and fended off the menace of their hegemony. We have telescoped this huge task into a span of a few months.

All patriots, and who is not a patriot now, are giving their best to the country. We look upon every Indian a patriot or a coming patriot. Patriotism is the sacred cow of our politics. We have plentiful pain and pleasure in working for the country. The country needs us. The need is here. The need is now. We can act, we will act and act now. India is our motherland, our heartland.

"Power or Prison" is our motto. Freedom or Funerals" is our clarion call. "No Bombs, No Boons" is our deep faith. Violence is a commonplace of all fights for freedom. It entails only bloodshed and only death ! Our spirit transcends prison walls. We place liberty above our lives and deliverance above death. Our determination to die keeps our mission alive. We do. We die. The line moves. Another, another and still another to infinity. We have developed a taste for troubles. Notwithstanding the odds and gross handicaps, we are getting across. This is a stiff test of our endurance. We are on the band-wagon. The time of tyrants has come. Time-bombs tick ominously for them. Death walks the streets. Worst has come to the worst. We have said this too many times too loudly.

I : But why violence for violence ? Why not tame the tyrant by some constitutional means ? Why not let the revolution work itself out? Mr. Gandhi, the high-priest of non-violence and Mr. Jinnah, a legal lion and a constitutional giant, condemn violent politics. Even potential terrorists first eschew violence and have a try at peaceful negotiations. Violence overshadows everything. The country has a grim history of political assassinations. Every sane person is now against violent solutions of political problems. Destruction is one thing, construction another.

Spy : We are not politicians but a pressure party, a gallant and gusty group, believing in agitational politics. However, we won't be first to seek out a clash with our oppressors. But if they do, we do. It is they who have triggered the crisis by violence. It is now our turn. They must take the consequences. Reprisals bring rapid results.

We will never negotiate. Our principles are under challenge. Negotiations will wear off our fighting edge. We will not give up our fight for long-range promises. We have already reached a rock-bottom and can be pushed no further. We have picked on the example of Subbash Chander Bose. Like Gandhiji, we can defeat the sword with our spirit and soul but violence, as advocated by Bose, promises quicker and better solutions to problems of power-politics. Violence is the only panacea over burgeoning imperialists. Our agitation is causing imperial mourning. We know them as we know ourselves. They are making protean efforts to keep their stranglehold. They won't leave this big and rich

country without a squeak. They would hit the roof to retain their hold at any risk. It is only do-gooders and the namby-pambies who are labouring under the wrong notion that the British will part with power without powder.

Patriots call down a plague on our foreign rulers. We disdainfully refuse to understand the grammar of their gun-powder. These pussy-footers will move only when pushed forward. They will never cease their hostile polemics without firing off their heaviest salvos. They won't withdraw easily, knowing, as they do, that withdrawal would mean loss of power, Empire, raw material, men and kind, trade and employment. We know it is not easy to uproot a foreign rule roosting on a high pedestal for over a century without resorting to violence. It is against this background that we have been canvassing violent disobedience beside the Congress Civil Disobedience. It is why all the freedom-fighting groups have braced themselves up to wring freedom out of unwilling hands by force. It is why we are going full-blast in getting India free. Our violence is proving a snooker shot so much that it has moved the dovecots in Delhi and the Downing Street. The Britishers keep themselves beyond brick-slinging distances and never venture near the railings.

Every Jack has his Jill. Ours is a case of David fighting Goliath. We won't brook any more these high-browed Goliaths. We have both valour and virtue. Our heroic deeds are legion. Our terrorists, superbly trained and motivated fighters as they are, are experts at ambush. They swagger the streets, carrying weapons, feeding people sensational stories. The whitemen have got as red as apples, inviting sticks and stones. They no longer enjoy diplomatic immunity or the ruler's prerogative from batons and brick-bats. We have the whiphand and would use any tool to hand. We know all the tricks of the trade. We are unable to conceive the present situation without violence. We are convinced that violence will get us in a matter of months what would have taken others the sweep of some decades to do. We won't believe in a defensive stance or a phased handover in terms of decades. We should get it fast or not at all. This being so, we have been doing it without a breather. For us, it is now or never. We have been holding unscheduled, off the cuff, meetings to discuss and decide our line of action. All political

parties are now flexing their muscles for "Direct Action". Nothing short of direct action will twitch their nerve. The fever burns fiercest. They should stop stoking a volcano. They have ruined us. We have the right of reply. We will deliver wholesale destruction and blame the bloodshed on them. The main cutting edge of our direct action is aimed against the British and their indigenous supporters, the native puppets.

Great things come with courage and conflict. Revolutions succeed with terror and truth, riot and rebellion and blood and battle. We are at war. We can find our way only from turbulence to tranquillity. We have the will, the power and the opportunity to strike and pull the British down from their golden tower. We make a staggering figure. A hard figure is not possible. Our party has membership in the thousands. The British tap and tape our telephones and steam open our letters. But we have checkmated them in their designs. We venture against any odds. We have nerve and energy enough to pack a big punch and take on an enemy several times our strength. We are not alone. Thousands invisible forces are collaborating with us to struggle against staggering adversities, difficulties and dangers. Millions of people are alongside us. We have taken our arguments to the people. We teach fearless truth. The tempo of public animus is rising against them. Freedom-fighters in the hundreds of thousand have shuffled out from their hideouts and taken a large hand in the movement. The country abounds in pragmatic nationalists imbued with a supreme sense of sacrifice. Thousands cavort around the country-side among the masses. I say everybody is with us : man in the street as well as in the field, bourgeoisie as well as proletariat, patricians as well as plebeians. We have lifted the masses from somnolence to wakefulness and from pacifism to militancy. Only a quick and correct fuse is required on mass emotion and explosive tension. The movement is in full swing. It is not an occasional peccadillo. Come what may, we won't tolerate a tiny island off the coast of Europe rule a teeming Asian sub-continent half the world away. An off-shore power, however powerful, can't fight us and ride the storm with their backs against a hostile distance of 6000 miles. Nobody can bottle up a running stream, much less a streamrolling flood. It is time Britain trimmed her sails to the winds of change.

I: You are a fresh and fragile fold, too tiny to

tinker with big things. It is not force but faith that defeats arms and armies. Faith may be in religion, nationalism, leadership, ideology or some other cognate cause.

Spy: Yes, we are complete neophytes in politics. And yet we have sufficiently proved that we are not a kid's stuff but a killing stuff, straddling the iceberg, moving to wreck Britania ruling the waves.

Deshbhagats are the hard core and heartbeat of the movement too well-known to need telling. We have strength and strategy to carry the can. We are the party of the period. No other party comes within touching distance. We have mounted our guards, loaded our guns, fixed our bayonets, drawn our swords and bent our arrows in a full-scale battle-array on all fronts and fields in the country. We will certainly hit finally now that we have been forced to the brink. We skulk in every nook and corner of the country, mounting a blockade of the British. With luck, upwards of two million deshbhagats are in the field. Many of us have turned guerillas. We are their haunting nightmare, the gunboat wing of the freedom-fighters, a formidable and reckonable side. It is we who defy death and buffet the brutal British doing the Nero in all their disguises. It is we who are doing the fighting and dying with full dedication. It is we who are either working underground or languishing in jails. Some of us have taken to the woods and hills, living in caves scooped out of them, suffering, as they do, untold privations and indignities.

We have faith like the Japanese have. It was their faith in the divine origin of their king and the infallibility of the institution that the Japanese had defeated Russia in 1904. It is because of the same faith that they have so far smashed the Allies in the Far East and reached the very gates of India in this war in a matter of days. It was faith in the righteousness of their cause that mere three divisions of the brave Finns led by Field Marshal Mannerheim kept at bay as many as one hundred divisions of the Red Army of Russia for as long as three months and eleven days in 1939-40.

I : But, mind you, more effective lessons are learnt from defeats than from victories. (The Russians learnt their lesson in Finland and this stood them in good stead in tneir war against Germany).

Spy : We have faith in our cause. We have forged a team of steel. Our organisation is an outgrowth of the National Liberation Movement. We are the pilot patriots with few peers in patriotism. We are in the lead and runners-up to none. We have invested our faith and resources in the movement. We spend every free minute in its cause. We are the spearhead of all the parties. We have among us nuts of all kinds, possessing courage and capacity, capability and tenacity and will and skill to succeed. We have a big stand-by party. We have no capital but sufficient teeth, conviction and character to retrieve our national pride and prestige. We have skills at all levels to do it among ourselves. We get all the hands we need. In the circumstances, it would be incorrect to say that our party is miniscule.

I : You gamble in false figures.

Spy : The British have created a situation. We are made for that situation. They are looking for us and we are ready for them. We are ready to pull punches, ready to die and to kill. We are even ready to come to our hands with them, do them down or be done. The hate campaign has reached a crescendo. We have concerted a plan to turn guerillas who would soon stantle all big cities into awareness, setting the Government on edge. We shall retaliate and requite them in full and forceful measure and cut them to size. We now know how to toss and ease them out of our paradise. We know the reason of their reluctance to go back : they have nothing to look back but a vast expanse of cold water and an icy cold weather. It is why they cling to keep the trappings of power. But we will squeeze and soak them up and roll them back home. The watersheds of time impel that they should quit an inhospitable sub-continent at the quickest. We would banish them beyond recall. It is always nice to go back home. It is always nice for colonists to go back home laden with loot in good time or we'll give them no time to make their dispositions in our country. We would wish them a good passage but no protection to late looters.

I : You say it is the British who have created a situation ; what situation ?

Spy: Revolution and violence are boiling over, gaining momentum in militancy without any let up. The revolution has long been preparing. The agitation has

replaced age and experience by youth. We have regimented the youth. A militant philosophy has developed among them. A new breed of terrorist politicians has broken out of the pacifist past. Rioting youths, armed with firearms and sticks tipped with metal, go at European executives and rough them up. Howling mobs with virulent anti-British feelings rage outside British residences. British Officers are now rejected and isolated, derided and despised. They are now seen in the open once in a blue moon. They are now like a rabbit fearing a stoat, bleating for help to stem the daily run-down of the situation. Rioters seek them out and grab them on the road-side by the necktie, asking : who are you to be wearing princely dresses in the midst of our stark poverty ? Quite a few of the foreigners have taken punishment like a truant getting spanking everyday of his schooling. They are good abuse absobers.

I : Why do deshbhagats bracket other foreigners with the British and manhandle them too?

Spy: We are irrevocably hostile to all brands of foreigners. There is no difference between a Britisher and any other white foreigner. It is six of one and half a dozen of the other. Colour is contagious. The iniquities and inadequacies of colonialism have had innumerable and intolerable common denominators. It is why colonialism is receiving a good drubbing at the hands of democrats everywhere. Imperialists are walking on a knife edge. Like other countries, India is no longer soft for colonialism.

This is a very sensational period. The whole country is now a sensitive area, a vast overkill arsenal of deadly weapons, a cellar choking with dry gunpowder, too big for the tiny Britain to diffuse. The British will now ride the high horse only for a fall. Anything that they say is nothing but a swan song. The people are full of lethal anger against them. They don't tolerate the very look of a Britisher. A red face is like a red rag to a bull. A country-wide conflagration is at the point of touch and go. No amount of repression can change their consensus. No occupation force can risk their outcry. It is deshbhagats who have provided powder next to the coal throughout the country. Demonstrations and nuggings in the streets are on the increase. Angry demonstrators sprawl in front of Government officers, rampage through streets, tearing down windows and everything that comes their way. Raging

and tense crowds are flooding pubs, buses and other public places, demanding that they should quit, the sooner the better. Reports are coming thick and fast of frenzied and violent manhandling in brave defiance of British legions, raising stench in their very nostrils. Mad mobs stone windows and yank down glassware of foreigners' shops in Lahore, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and other big cities. The Police are at odds with them through the night. Fires are started and buildings set ablaze in European quarters. Cars are smashed and tyres deflated. Shooters and stabbers prowl British localities. A round of assassinations of British officers has already started. Political fanaticism is now the common attribute of assassins. Irate Indians are throwing bombs and bottles on all foreigners who, reeling, as they are, from the impact of assassinations, sit up worried, pass sleepless nights and anxious days lying low like lambs. Grenades are being lobbed into Government offices. Patriots storm jails, release prisoners, killing security guards and policemen. Everybody is now nationalist to the point of xenophobia and glamorises and dramatises political murders. Firebrands incinerate British goods, burn the king of England, the Viceroy of India and other high British officials in effigy, thereby giving smarting blows to their prestige, tarnishing their image, destroying their legend and pulling down the wizards artifice. Our belief in them is gone and so has our false fear of them. Their prestige has dwindled to nothing. Even those, who had at first tepidly supported them, are now dead set against them.

Lately, patriots protested the death of a patriot in the midst of surging crowds in Amritsar. The incident added fuel to the formidable fire, making another splash in the movement. The crisis has deepened and the situation gravely worsened. Brutality and chaos plague the country. The prevailing state of tension and tyranny is a grim portent taut with perils for the British. Deadly dormant but ever dangerous feelings are coming to a head. We must feed the unrest and jolt the rickety regime.

Deshbhagats, who are the real firebrands of the revolution, have got into the thick of the fight and taken a large hand in its success. Many of them have been sentenced to the Andeman Islands. This has heated up the crisis still further. The British have got well into deep mud and mire. They are down, though not yet out. They see quite clearly the writing on the wall

that the guerdon of their misdeeds would be bitter fruit presently. All this should be a sufficient eye-opener for Britain's complacent mandarins and bemused policy-makers. The British are now a bird of passage. They are now on the rocks. Their halcyon days are over. They shall have to quit or go west. We shall hang on like grim death. They shall have to strain every ligament to get out of India. But it would then be the day after the fair and after we have written their elegy.

The British cannot bring discipline to the situation, curb political crime by military or police power. They can't dispel the fast gathering clouds. They can't control trouble-shooters by curfews. They impose a curfew, ease it and re-impose it. A "revolution" is ideas and nobody can put them in jail. In spite of the draconian measures taken to do us down, violent suppression, terror and torture, the liberation movement is coming alive. They can't hack us down by force. How they can control the situation so late must rank as black magic by the whites. The movement is sure to live through these fads. It is on the march everywhere. It is going ahead with full fury and force. It is both real and ideal. They can't skuttle it. We are not afraid of the unreal horror. We will face it forthrightly. They can't squash the movement or squelch a growing agitation, anarchy and militarism. Any deadly lull is sure to explode into a dangerous and deafening detonation any moment. Most of the patriots are working underground, popping up at vulnerable points at suitable time.

I : You are much of a rebel. You have overdrawn the picture and overdramatised the situation, blowing petty incidents out of all proportion. You better draw it mild. Your violent way is drastically wrong. It has stirred up a rash of riots and violent strikes. Violence has been squarely condemned by top leaders. A reckless abandon is no early or easy solution to our problems. You are heading into a hazy and hazardous future. Why step down an unfamiliar path, a blind leap into unchartered waters full of dangers ? Why take a plunge into a cold, hard and strenuous sea? Very often, crack marksmen never hit anyone, much less the bull's eye. Why encourage terror tactics? It would be fateful to make terrorists heroes.

Spy : No, it is no blind leap. We have fathomed the depth of the waters. We have waited and seen the whites at the throats of non-whites far too long. We have

witnessed enough of imposed authority and survived and lived down their vicious attacks. We have lived with their aggression so long that we have come to accept it as a part of our way of life. We have so far been doves without wickedness. We have throughout confined ourselves to merely gritting our teeth and suffered in silence. We have lived on hope and faith and talked long and late for over one hundred years. Now we want a revolution of values of man and market.

The British have bled us to death, denuded us of our wealth, health and character of our very belief in existence and of our human values. They have clamped an aristocratic system on our country. We want to banish such an abnoxious system and see that it does not raise its grisly head again. Their rule is now a faded shadow. Their time is up : they have been given only some time of grace. They are almost in retreat. They can no longer hold, much less restore, the situation. Hostility against them is mounting dangerously. They are beatable with the right kind of campaign. They are at grips with the worst crisis in living memory. We want to chase them away, these pagodas of plague and dehumanising oppression. Our innings has come. Now more than ever is the time to strike against these imperialists, these interlopers, these perverters of our values. It is time to relieve the whitemen of his burden, and make him quit. We will send him home with a bang. It's about time we did it. The future is hazardous but no longer hazy. Nothing can stem the compelling tide of a popular uprising.

The British are in vain making desperate efforts to restore a semblance of quiet. They are busy contriving diversions. A large number of places in the country have become top military priority but the military and the police, working in double-harness, are failing to make a dent at most of the places. The odds are too heavily against them. The Police have no time to deal with crime. We have bandits on the country-side. It is virtually free for all, unchecked and undetected.

Call us rebels or revolutionaries. All our afflictions and depriviations are due to them. We are out to change our chains. Human nature spoils for newness. We want a change, a real change. We see a change without progress. The change is only in their tactics. Appointments of new Viceroys augur no change in Britain's policy for the better. The policy suffers from a faulty

vision blurred by blinkers and a quixotic miscalculation of the situation which is daily deteriorating into an irremediable crisis. But they can't blink facts, duck the truth or brush their brutalities under the rug indefinitely.

Revolutions and rebellions are not local affairs. Like air, they are everywhere. We have imported our brand of rebellion and revolution from no country other than Britain herself. It is from them that we have learnt just how to do the trick and ignite political grievances. It is the British who have taught us two things (*i*) how to fight for our rights and (*ii*) how to speak and write bad English. We have resolved on a course of fight for our right, using bad English, not unoften bad language. Our movement is a version of agitation for the Magna Carta. Indians have few white collar jobs. Our bad English is alleged to have held us back. Paradoxically, Indians can have all the jobs by retaining bad English and expelling the good English !

Now a flashpoint has reached. The whole country is on the boil, in high ferment, awfully convulsed by violence. Deshbhagats are the yeast of the ferment. The country is rocked by a titanic revolution. Disaffection. has gone deep. The situation is serious. It is sure to become critical. The British can no longer police the peace. They can't hold a slipping situation. They can't educe order out of chaos. We are confident we can ride the storm and the tired tiger. It is no longer a rough ride. Our right makes our might. We have now lots of teeth to grit as well as hit. Doves have become hawks and daredevils. Time is the impeccable judge. We are giving the British bad and tragic time. They had never had it so bad as now. We are sure to make these skyscrapers reconcile with the earth. The erstwhile arrogant British strutting about with disdainful walk are now in dire agony. They have now more than enough to worry, feeling, as they do, that the climate is utterly abominable. They, who were always at our throats, are now at our feet.

Polybius, who lived in the second century B C, says, and I agree with him, that

> "There are for all men two ways of improvement, namely—by ones own disaster or of others. . . . . . .".

We are sure of our improvement from bondage into independence. Both the alternatives have been fulfilled. We met our disaster about a century ago. We are

shoving our disaster back to the British and they are already in the midst of it. Every disaster is also an opportunity. The disaster of the British has given us our opportunity. Slaves secure salvation through crises and disasters.

We have gained our fire. The British are right on the firing line. We won't hold our fire any more. Most of this fire comes from the masses who are our sheet-anchor. It is the Britishers' own duplicity that is back-firing, bringing them to rack and ruin. They know all this and yet are keeping up appearances with mock bravado. They also know that none of us fluffs their fire. They can't put out our fire if they don't discover what is burning. In fact, the duplicity observed by them is the Achilles' heel. The people have found it for themselves that the British are wolves in grandmamas' nightdress. They have snapped all connections and co-operation with them.

I : Your agitation is ill-timed. You can get nothing from a war-worried Englishman.

Spy : No, no : it is time to straightjacket the British, haul down the Union Jack from its lofty masts and hoist ours. It is time to boot the British out of India, bag and baggage. They have over-reached themselves. They are now ripe for disaster. This is a cyclone. The wheel is turning. We are bringing the wheel full circle. Only their fortune stands between them. Our activities have caused them trepidation. They can't stem the storm of a mortal struggle in an age of dynamic movements for freedom. They can't rule us with unrelenting and unremitting hostility and tension. Our country is in the throes of an agonising political conundrum. It is now a restless, violent and volcanic India. We have set the pace and cleared the decks for thousands of patriots. A good number of them have combat experience and, as such, are girding for the imminent showdown. We are feeding the fire to jolt this rickety Government. Things are on the upswing and are getting done. We deshbhagats are the workers. The British are craftsmen wilting under our unflagging pressure. We have staying power to combat them. We are valiantly fighting them. But they avoid a showdown fearing lest it should turn into a slide. Whenever it comes to actual sabre-rattling, we will make mincedmeat of them. We have no doubt that only fear of sudden death around the corner will send them home sooner than later. Murderous violence alone will trigger their exodus and hasten the day of our deliverance. It is

cheaper to die now. It is difficult to restrain the ebullliance of those who cannot wait to kill or be killed. The British are afraid to die in luxury. We are afraid to live in slavery. They have run their day. These are their death days, facing, as they are, their defeat in the last ditch. This is their last lament—at best, their last laugh. We quite visualise the immediacy of independence.

I : No, independence cannot be won so easily. The British won't just pick Mr. Gandhi and do a deal with him. The Congress can't just switch the British off by the flick of a master-finger or by the loudest slogans. It is a century-old, deep-rooted Government capable of putting up the strongest opposition. Even God took six days to create an orderly universe and this when He was working without opposition.

The people are sick of cheap jargons of patriotism repeated *ad nauseum*. Except for Mr. Gandhi and some of his top lieutenants, politicians are hedging in their predictions, failing, as they do, to provide even a modicum of leadership.

Spy : Apart from the sage of Sewagram (Mr. Gandhi), the torch is now in younger and eager hands. Deshbhagats know more than anybody else that it is not easy to wrest power from a grabber. All those who show a spark of freedom are jailed. The alien Government does not tolerate a popular or powerful figure. The sight of barefooted fighters for freedom wearing clothes torn by the Police wrings our tears.

I : Votaries of violence shall have to repent and run the fell acts of assassins. You are in the grip of warped thinking. Your grim predictions won't come true. All that you presage is sheer Delphian prophecy. You should not do anything desperate. You have enthusiasm without experience. Foolish bravado won't pay. It is always safe to act with reason and restraint.

Spy : You policemen are prophets of doom. Though this is our first incursion into politics, we know the job well. We are guided by our conscience every step of the way. We regret nothing of what we have done. We are not sorry we did this or that. We would do it over again. What we are doing had to be done some time and this is the time. Violence is the last voice of victims. We would give them what they have been giving us—bullets. Now it is their turn to ask for what they will get. They came by the gun. They have lived by the gun. They will now die by the gun. What they did and have been doing is

not beyond us now. We will do it all too often. We will destroy by force what they established by fraud. We have raised Frankensteins' monster by whipping up public fury against them. The seeds of sedition have wafted across all barriers and boundaries. Revolts have rent their aura of omniscience. The anti-British stance of the people is breathing fire and brimstone. The anti-Government feelings are running riot in an avalanche of revolution. The air is surcharged with repeated rumblings of trouble all over the country. Our campaign has got underway. The heart, the mind and the will of the people are in the movement. The entire country is in revolution, foaming with fury. We are in instant and constant fighting trim to give them battle on the ashes of their Empire. All the deshbhagats are capable of bearing arms. The British have been ruling us by torture and terrorism and other soul-searing brutalities. We hate them more than we used to fear them previously when it had been easier to be afraid than to stand up and face them. We have manpower, brain-power and striking-power. A united people is a super power.

I : You are a vilifying traducer, belching slanders and slogans and catechisms. You should believe in solutions and not in slogans.

Spy: Slanders and slogans are a convenient bludgeon for pummelling a foreign Government. The masses scream curses and shout their hatred at passing Britishers. They are easily set off by arrests of political workers.

I: Your riotous enthusiasm is swayed by emotion. It is difficult for reason to guide passion. Patience rather than petulance is the need of the time.

Spy: No, that's incorrect. The political movement is being ravaged by sneak attacks of mercenaries. The movement has aroused the ire of British chauvinism. Had not World War II supervened, they would have made a short-shrift of whatever small baits they have given to our leaders. They unsay what they say. We undo what they do.

I: I would still advise restraint and urbanity in your approach.

Spy: But the British have exhausted our sobriety. It is difficult to observe restraint about the outrages committed by them. We have found our prime enemies. We will fix them and fight them. We are deeply aware that they

are our bitterest and nearest foe. They presume too much on their power. Our basic arsenal is man. We have good and great soldier material among us. We have crack shots and stalkers who have teeth but no tails. Our man-power is more than enough to meet their fire-power. This man-power is contributed by all the communities. The Hindus (said he with a broad smile) who make mortal gods, plenty and to spare, at will, can unmake the devotees of the solitary God with great dare! But revolutions are made by minorities no less. Sikhs are a vocal, virile and vital minority. We have contributed a more than usual quota to the political casualities in and outside India. The Komagatamaru Ghadarites did outside the country what the Babar-Akalis and dare—devil deshbhagats are doing inside for its emancipation. As they say, God's lions are not deterred by the cunning of a fox. We are a real tough team with a bitter bite. We may have to lose many a skirmish to win a landslide. We will fight it out, ditch by ditch, to the last ditch.

I: Exalted by stupid notions, you are raving, prodding people into violence. You are in manifest error, a fumbling tender-foot, talking fire and force. Such a ding-dong talk won't tick, stemming, as it does, from a perverse view of the whole affair, mistaking the emotional for the real. Your folly has overtaken your wits. Communalism is explosive and the smallest atom may set it off. Some of our cities have recently been rocked by communal riots. We visualise an ugly period of sanguinary civil war, horrible chaos and political gangsterism. The various parties would hustle for power in the vacuum. Fragmentation of the country will start in the wake of the British quitting. Violent patriotism, like crime, does not pay. It would only prolong their stay.

Spy: You are still betting on losing horses. Indignation mixed with bitterness is boiling to burst out. Nothing short of full independence would cool it down. Britain is resting on her rusty oars, losing all the tinsels and trappings of sovereignty. It is time she took eclipse with a becoming dignity and left instead of sticking her head into the sand.

The British are the most fanatical nationalists in the world. Why shouldn't we? Why should they cultivate theirs' and kill ours'? They lambast us for patriotism. Why? Their abrasive conduct is the worst tinder for our revolt. They have pushed our country towards the

brink, making us violent extremists with no middle-of-the-roaders. Violence alone will give quick dividends.

(Cf: "Life is violent, people are violent, and if indeed we are descended from Australopithecus Africans there can be no surprise about it"—William Emms).

You have raised the spectre of civil war. It is a gloomy prediction which would never be fulfilled. We see straight to find our soul in our own soil again. All the parties, whatever their labels and nomenclatures, are intensely Indian, imbued with national fervour. Our leaders are resolute and sane and sober enough to sink their differences and put the country on an even keel. It is only small segments of the public sector that are suffering from racialist obsessions. To meet this minor menace, we are striving for a multi-racial harmony because it is time to rise against the British hegemony.

If at all it comes, the civil war would be a lesser evil shorter than the present unending military war. We know that, as always, it won't be easy to adjust to any new order. We know the pangs of civil war. We know the agony of change. But we also know that it won't be too long to reorder new India. Whatever the cost, whatever the consequences, it would be un-Indian to remain unfree indefinitely. It would be better to rule in hell than be a slave in heaven. If the threatened civil war is an unfailing trailor to independence, let it come; we will face it and efface it. We prefer the risks of revolution to the blessings of British bayonets. We prefer a zero to a Nero. A Nero has never been a hero.

I: You are a pack of rabble-rousers, suffering from an Anglo-phobia.

Spy: No, we are not. It is wrong we incite riots. It is the British who have caused blaring incitement to violence. The freedom movement would be choked to a trickle if we did not stand up against violence by violence. We are deeply committed to heave these pagodas from their pillar of power. Hatred of the British has made us a cohesive force. We simply refuse to live up to the law the British make for us. We are taking the national disaster consequent upon the war waged by our foreign exploiters in stride. We are flexing our muscle to have a final bout with them.

The British are under siege internally as well as externally. They are losing ground both in war and in peace everywhere in the world. They can now continue their

hold by precious little. The draconian measures being taken by them won't help them. They can no longer contain or control the situation which is rapidly collapsing into anarchy. Chaotic conditions prevail. Life and law are no longer one. Both law and order have taken a holiday and become a some-time thing. Now law and order are imposed by force rather than accepted. The situation has never been too good over the years. The genie is out of the bottle. The country is stalked by terror of outlaws. The British can't catch up with the rebel's ubiquity and initiative on the roads and off the roads. People loathe travel by night because of frequent road blocks by robbers. Villagers go about their daily chores armed with firearms. We live in a lawless land.

The Government is being rightly blamed for every wrong. People with whom the Government was all but going to law only the other day have been dignified by grandio titles in a last bid to find new moorings and new bearings. But all too late, they are playing for time to try every possible gambit to stave off the doomsday. The sands are running out. They can't shore up the public confidence in the administration which is sliding to a grinding halt. We have already hamstrung the administration at every turn of the road and strained the law and order situation to a breaking point. The British can't ease the squeeze. Our young wolves are showing their teeth to the white black sheep, sweeping through the country, having the run of all important places, making piloff of the administration, gingering the administrator up and giving him a sharp lesson. These youngsters have blood and warmth for our oppressed countrymen.

Political ferment in schools and colleges is telling upon this already sagging administration no less. Student rioting has erupted all over the country. Students hold rallies to protest the British intransigence to transfer power to Indians and quit. They defy the British, revile them and denounce them. The situation is extremely critical. The British shall have to retreat to avoid rout.

I: Only such students from schools and colleges are fighting in the revolution as are drop-outs on account of delinquency and deficiency.

Spy: No, students are as good patriots as any. The real laboratory of liberation lies in our schools and colleges. It is students who are particularly volatile and intensely nationalistic. They identify themselves emotionally with

a national cause, though, at times, they are amenable to manipulation from many vicious quarters. They know more than any other Indian how the British have strained life for us and how they are bending all their guile to stay. They have had a clear vision more than anybody else that we have a chance which won't come again looking for us.

Apart from the students, we have an assortment of professors, lawyers, militarymen, policemen, judges and other services in our organisation. I have read in the papers that Chief Justice Shadi Lal was the first to garland Gandhiji when he visited Lahore last. In fact, no true Indian can sit back as a detached spectator. Every Indian, whatever his status in life, has mentally declared war against the British and is itching to settle accounts with them full time all the way. Every Indian is a patriot, putting his shoulder to the wheel.

I: What you say is a blue-print of violence. Your favourite ploy is to call for strikes escalating into vicious riots. Clashes between the Police and demonstrators erupt everywhere, crippling our industry and family life.

Spy: Our policemen are defectors from the national interest. They do more than the bare minimum required by duty to their British masters. Strikes can't justify their gratuitous folly in committing excesses on Indians with swinging truncheons, giving ghastly appearances to our cities. Pitched battles between the Police and our toughs using bullets and brickbats occur daily for the benefit of the British. The Police faces strident abuse and censure. Repeated attacks on the police and senior British officers show the unexpended fury of our freedom-fighters. We are not unaware that the British would try to convert a possible military defeat outside India into a political victory within. But we are sanguine that they would lose in India even whatever little they gain in the war. Already, we are witnessing them losing their battle in Indian streets. Bottles fly and bombs crash and whoop in European quarters. They have had a dreary time. They can never gain a reprieve from the doom that threatens them hourly. It is time they retroceded to Indians all that is Indian and bowed out.

I: Why do you fire the Police in season and out of season at one go? Give me one good reason and I will change my colour and career?

Spy: We have a committed police, a political police, mostly dolts, unquestioning yesmen, the biggest British Trojan

Horse, beaten to death in the flesh and in spirit. Money is the measure of every mercenary. Our policemen are merciless mercenary hacks, bag bearers of the British, doing their duty with the docility of a dog, playing the public drumbeaters for them. A mercenary is an actor without character. Career ambition has blunted their brains. But baton and brain do not go together. They are the hachetmen of the British, having capitulated themselves to the tyranny and brutality of the Ogpu. These bully-boys are more loyal than the king. What they say and do is all very English. We deprecate their ultra pro-British stance. We pooh-pooh the British where they kowtow them.

We suffer the Police bastinados for our patriotism. They rip down our posters, clean our slogans scrawled on the walls, zip into demonstrators with flailing truncheons, mow them down or scatter them by violence only to find them surging again in larger numbers. We are on Police books. The Police patrols seek out our sanctuaries, frisk passers-by for explosives and rejoice in castigating us. It seems to have gone haywire with our Police that they don't appreciate the blessings of the prospective independence. They support the foreign Government but do not cherish the people. There is no understanding or dialogue forum between the public and the Police. Big stick fills the gap. Money plugs the chinks.

It is a Police State. The Police plays power politics. Normally, it should have nothing to do with policy and politics. In practice, it makes and unmakes both. We have no doubt that they do all this with the "gracious" permission of the British, nay, under British prompting and Governmental auspices. The Defence of India Rules and the Bengal Regulations have given them carte blanche to make our lives a veritable hell and our homes houses of horror. But the British must have realised that they can no longer wield big stick through their whipping boys. The explosive situation is worrying even the bayonet-twirling and gun-toting Police. We are gun-ridden, *danda*-driven and batton-beaten. And yet the Police have failed to produce order. The people look at the Police as a race apart. It would be as well if the Police did less well. Who does nothing to harm the national cause does it very well. The police should always stand right outside the political scrimmage.

Professor Bayley says: It is generally accepted that the nature of police activities provides an important clue

to the character of a political (in this case a colonial) regime.

I: No, it is not a Police State. The Police is the only visible face of any civil administration. The rest is invisible. What is visible has misled you into calling it a Police State. The Police is a department of shocks. We give shocks and receive shocks. Only the guilty feel the pinch of it, the rest are good shock-absorbers.

Spy: We see too many Police giving shocks to patriots who are certainly not guilty and yet they feel the pinch.

I: What for had the Japanese given you firearms?

Spy: For use on the Police and their helpers.

I : A political movement is measurable by men and money. Where do the deshbhagats get money to do all the work?

Spy : All the 24 spies were given Rs. 5000 each by the Japanese to meet their expenses in India. The amount was soon found to be insufficient for the job. Avdeshwar Rai told me that the Congress had so big political funds obtained from the Tatas, the Birlas and other billionaire businessmen that it was financing its rank and file and outspending its rivals. He also told me that the Congress High Command had been giving, as it does, funds and its blessings to the top brass of deshbhagats and other organisations working for the independence of the country. But since a political party cannot prosecute its work on subventions alone, our firebrands have been flexing their militant muscles and strengthening their economic sinews by committing political crimes. Shot-gun gangs are on the prowl in getaway cars, committing political dacoities and robberies in banks. They keep scrupulous accounts of every bit of money, even though obtained unscrupulously.

I : What is the extent to which the Congress High Command is involved in the violent activities of the Forward Bloc, the Rashtrya Sewak Sangh (RSS) and other terrorist gangs?

Spy : I do not know whether or not the Congress is involved in the violent activities of the Forward Bloc, the RSS or, if involved, what is the extent of its involvement. I am not aware if any of the militant elements enjoy the sneaking sympathy or support of the Congress. However, nothing is taboo. Everything is being done without any let or hindrance under the very noses of the Congress. In spite of professions of non-violence by Gandhiji, I have

never come across of any condemnation by him or other leader of the political dacoities or of the bomb-outrages or of other types of violence alleged to have been committed by RSS and other political workers. It is not possible to distinguish the RSS from various splinter groups of the Congress. All are chips of the same bloc, a macedoine of violence and non-violence. It does not matter much what they call themselves as they are the various versions of the same Hindu brotherhood. The non-violent campaign of the Congress and the terrorist activities of the Forward Bloc and the RSS are concurrent.

But no true patriot can find fault with anything, violent or non-violent, done with intent to liberate the country from the foreign yoke. They call us Robinhood hordes. But if it is sacrosanct in Britain to rob Peter to pay Paul despite the moral turpitude involved, why can't patriots do it for a better cause at the expense of the tipsy frolics of our foreign exploiters? Patriotism, however wrong, is always the right way.

I : Are you aware of any tacit or explicit understanding between the Congress and the Japanese on the issue of the Indian independence?

Spy: Nothing except one thing. Netaji Subash Chandar Bose was on his way to Japan when he met his death in an aircrash. But then he was a renegade from the Congress High Command. There was no love lost between him and Gandhiji, Pandit Nehru and other Congress leaders on the question of means and methods to be adopted for the emancipation of the country.

I : But Congress or the Congress High Command is not wholly made up of Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Nehru and a few others. Mr. Subhash Chandar Bose belonged to the Congress no less. He was the founder of the Forward Bloc inside the Congress. And he was not alone in the means and methods to be adopted to oust the British from India. The RSS and other terrorist elements had their roots in the Congress of the brand and cult propounded by Mr. Subhash Chandar Bose.

Spy: I know little to differ. Our mission was confined mainly to the collection and communication of interesting intelligence to the Japanese in Burma and destruction or disruption of the British war-effort in India.

MERCHANTS—MISSIONARIES—MASTERS

I: Why do you castigate a world power known for its best builders?

Spy: The builders of this world power wormed their way into our country by fraud in the distant and dark past. They came in a double role of merchant-missionaries. They soon stumbled on a big and vast treasure trove. The treasure brought them lush pickings and sovereignty. What they got accidently has been perpetuated deliberately. The one time East India Company of shopkeepers soon became "Looters Limited", beating the notorious buccaneers in their race for trade and territory. Traders turned invaders and administrators, swelling into elegant lords overnight. They now began to cling desperately to every sliver of territory wherever they could find one. They ultimately came to the Punjab, then ruled by the Sikhs. The Sikhs won many victories but lost the war.

The British soon became territorial and commercial imperialists and rapacious exploiters with a sprawling Empire. Like air, they are now everywhere. The sky is the limit. Our country is the Cinderella of Britain's three Viceregal Territories within her Empire. England and America, between them, soon began to control the whole world. It may be different with America but how and why tiny and tight Britain has taken upon herself to Police the wide world is not clear. What a progress: from trade to territory. Flag followed trade.

The British have now the big problem of too much. Though they are everywhere on the map, they are virtually nowhere on the ground. They are out of their depth, fading fast. When reason ceases, ruthless rule ceases too. They and their diplomacy are in retreat. They have lost the aura of a superior race and the spectre of invincibility. It no longer helps them to be English.

The British Empire, a fraud in origion and foul in conduct is in decline. It is sure to collapse like a row of dominoes. It has entered a deepening twilight. The centre of its gravitation is changing. It is now speedily on the slide, floundering from crisis to crisis. It is long time dying. The insidious process of its break-up has been going on for years. It is nearing the milestone of its disintegration. Its coherence cannot be preserved any longer. Its prestige has slumped because of the iniquities and malfeasance of its rulers. They are too late to live down their past record, redeem their reputation or rehabilitate themselves,

much less hanker after a haven. It would be futile to seek moorings in shallow water.

India, which has been the epitome of the Empire for most Englishmen, is getting out of Britain's hands. British India is fading fast, giving place to Indian India. Britain's chips are down. She shall have to disengage herself from her ephemeral dependencies, shrink and shrivel into a spook, a mere scare-crow frightening only those who do not know. The lioness is losing her teeth. She has lost much of her vim and vigour as the world's gendarme. She is failing from all to nothing. It is time this exhausted lioness retired into her distant den for a long sleep. That the sun never sets on her Empire would soon be a forgotten fable. She will presently go in search of the sun. We are going to put a big shade on that sun. She would be presently the world's biggest loser of her dreamland of Pax Britanica. The Empire is shrinking inward daily. It would not be long before little Britanica would be an old ruin, an international wilderness, just what she had been, a tiny speck on the titanic world and not the world itself. She is in a recession, slipping back into the dark distance. She would not be worth a whoop without her Empire. Already, she looks like a tiny fish darting to and fro in turbid waters. Her glamour is going slumming. With India gone, she would be a pitiful remnant of a one-time imposing Empire. It is certainly not the will of God that this tiny country with a coterie of Cromwells should hold big India in the small hollow of her hand. Things are going sour rapidly. She shall have to come out of her ivory tower and face reality. She is steadily coming down the pitch to run out and stream home helter skelter, as if the devil would overtake the hindmost. The more wary among them have already started trekking home in trickles, finding India no longer tenable. Now their problem would be how to get out with all the important faces suitably saved. Everybody knows that their exit is no longer a matter of doubt, dispute or debate. If they want an honourable out, this is the time. They are too good in bad times to last any more. They should set their withdrawal for some near date, now that they have a receding future. They should count their fortunes and depart.

As mentioned earlier, the British came in different roles: first as missionaries, then as traders and lastly as invaders, ending up as cruel administrators. They are now shrinking in a reverse order into missionaries. They

know how strongly the cards are stacked against them. Whatever their cards in the game, patriots hold all the trumps and aces. They are old hands at the game full of life and mischief. But then old hands are using new tactics, playing the game wrong with a tireless subterfuge, sophistry and ingenuity, not realising, like the proverbial ostrich, that they are indulging in self-deception. We are simply amused to see their much-exhibited principles taking a beating at their own hands. They have thrown their inhibitions to the winds and charged us with false allegations. This is how they are fighting a last-ditch battle, seeking a way against us by hook or by crook. They are now no more than holding their own, merely conducting just a holding operation rooted in creeping defeatism. They can't succeed. They can't do anything more than a flea-bite or a flash in the pan. We have sufficiently fluttered these dovecots. We know them too well. We know our ropes as well. We have hibernated with them for too long. Whatever they do or do not do has aroused public ire. They have always peddled swindle on us and deluded and duped us. All that they say or do is a facade. They have exhausted their ethics. They are now on the brink of a crumbling, over-hanging precipice, heading for the doom of a besetting day inspite of their desperation to play the rope trick, making relentless efforts and every gambit to stay and stick. But they can't stave off the day of their departure. They can't keep our politicians in Cinderela's role, fail our plans or hold them up. We have forced our pace. Our potential is limitless. They shall have to accept the situation gracefully. Discontent is seething both below and above the surface.

The British are definitely in retreat, facing gloom and doom, gripped, as they are, by suspicion, cynicism and diplomatic horse-trading, totally unable to sway and swagger in gay abandon. It is still time they swallowed the false pride and quit. Quit they must. They know it. We know it. They are simply taking time to mull over the question as to when they should. They have gone out of style and out of step with Indian time, as well as international time. International morality is fighting the creeping cancer of colonialism.

Now that we are inexorably forging ahead, the British are visibly on edge, worried about their skidding popularity. However long their stay,they still remain essentially alien and outstandingly reactionary, suffering

from perverse myopia. We are sure that their intellectual and power dominance would end and their big-power illusion fade very soon.

I: Yes, Britain is a tight and tiny island. But greatness does not depend upon size. You want her to get out quick. But she won't topple at a touch. The Quit India resolution passed by the All-India Congress in August, 1942 cannot act as the magic "Seasame" which had opened Ali Baba's cave. Transition takes time. She will take time to disengage herself from her titanic burden. The achievement of independence and the consequent transition are not something hit or miss operations.

Spy: The British scream to the whole world that Indians are the whiteman's burden. Why did they come here all the way from half a world away to carry the burden? How is it that though the whiteman cries and creaks under the burden, yet he clings to it and wages wars to keep and carry it? The gibe goes: why don't the British throw their burden? Why don't they ease their load and travel back home light?

We Indians know that the British will never throw the burden. Therefore, it is now the burden that is slipping down. Except for the burden, they have carried home everything belonging to that burden! What a shift in the position. The tired whiteman now can't live without the burden while the burden can! The burden does not any more want the whiteman's costly and creaking conveyance. The burden has come of age and needs no more tutelage, no lift or lead. The whiteman is no longer a demi-god or innately superior to the enlightened burden. He seized power and picked up the burden in the dim past. The people are now wide awake. In the circumstances, it is time these good Samaritans of the entire world threw the burden and hastened back home. It is time to relieve the small Island of its back-breaking burden of dozens of coloured countries and give the whiteman his well-earned holiday. The blacks are no longer the burden of the whites. It is now the other way round. The whiteman is now the whole world's burden! Burdens we bear, benefits they derive. It is our intense conviction that the whites have an all black future and that colonialism is almost dead or on its sick bed.

I: Where do you stand on the war?

Spy: What war? We know of no Indian war. We know of a war which is not our war. It is waged by foreign

war-makers and war-mongers. We know of it because it is we who feel the blast of it, foot the bill of it and face the consequences of it. We are unnecessarily locked in a brutal and bitter war of British making. They get involved in any and all international disputes at our expense. We are employed on defence chores. Our men and money and our foodstuffs are seeping out of the country to serve and save them and defend their Empire. We have served them both in peril and in peace. It is a British war waged with our blood. The British are talking peace but acting war! The country is reeling from the hideous effects and terrible torment of this disastrously expensive war, bringing, as it does, exterminating havocs, putting a drag over the development of our country. We are poor and boggle at the destruction wrought by it. It is a modern war. It determines, not who is right but, who is left.

It is wrong to say that the British go to war to prevent war. It is easy to wage a war but not that easy to win it or put a period to it. A war has a knack of getting out of hand. Wars beget wars. This war is a total war. Victory will belong to none but its havocs and horrors to everyone. It would be a Pyrrhic victory for either side. Disasters always exceed triumphs. The Axis and Allied powers have already lost millions of troops on land and at sea. The fatal war race will end up all the belligerents. It is edging Britain out of first place.

The British lived through World War I by absolute lies. They are courtier-soldiers who made up their lack in power and prowess by false propaganda and publicity. But for the last minute tipping of scales by fresh American forces, Germany had virtually beaten the whole world. And yet the British had the temerity to trick the whole world into the belief that it were they who were forging ahead, as though under cover of Axis victories! Defeats were dished out as tactical retreats. We heard them say this many a time but never found them do anything any time. What they claimed just wasn't true. The people knew, as they do, the inside story. The gibe among the people still goes :—

"Fateh German ki hoti hai,
Qadam English ka Barhta hai!"

(It is the Germans who win victories, but, lo, it is the English who advance !)

With this type of "victories," the British can never be defeated by the Germans or the Japanese or all the Axis Powers put together! It is these very "traditional victories" of the British that have brought the Germans to the very doors of Britain and the Japanese to that of British India in the current World War II. The Japanese cracked the British codes, crumpled their defences and made a mouthful of their scratch forces. It is in keeping with this sort of epic "victories" that Britain is taking a terrible beating at the hands of the Axis Powers both in the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Getting, as they do, a bad stick, they are in a humiliating retreat on all fronts of the war. They are being administered a severe drubbing on our eastern front. With Burma already fallen, they are sure to lose Assam and Bengal and face their Bay of Pigs in the Bay of Bengal before long. The lie of the land is extremely favourable to the enemy andvance in these areas. And yet the publiciy tis palpably at variance with their poor performance. No effort is spared to out-Goebbel Goebbels when, in truth, they should drink to their defeats. The Government has to face a series of rumpus in the House of Commons over the rueful reverses.

(The gibe was a household word both during and after the two World Wars. Fantastic stories were invented and put into circulation with great relish. The one mentioned by an eminent Judge, known for writing light lampoons ringing with ridicule, is typical of the taste and stinging satire bruited about Britain in various circles at the time).

"A friend told me that he was reminded of a war anecdote in respect of Hitler. The holy angels complained to the Lord God that Hitler was causing mischief in the land; wherefore Hitler was summoned, but he in his turn complained that Mr. Churchill was responsible for it. So Mr. Churchill was summoned, but he disowned all liability, and pointed out that on all the hundred and one fronts the British Army was everywhere in the rear and other people were fighting. So the Lord God sat thinking and adjourned the case for orders." (Chief Justice Kayani in his book "Not the Whole Truth").

(This reminds us of General Smut's historic words: "Hitler is winning victories but losing the war". This was what actually happened in the result).

(General, now Lord. Montgomery, made interesting comments on the Allies' victory in the Second World War; "We have won the war militarily and we have lost the peace twice).

(Whatever the result of the war, the Germans were held in great awe by their friends and foes alike :

"What a formidable people, a truly great people." This was what General Charles de Gaulle said cf the Germans in 1944).

I repeat it is a British war. Britain is always in dispute with someone somewhere. It is none of our business. It is not of our making. It is not of our seeking. We have no stake in it. We have no finger on its trigger. To us, the war should be no more than headlines in newspapers. But it is we who bear its grievous burden. It is we who lead vicarious lives and they victorious lives. It is our country that is sundered by the war. Its scars, hardships and hazards are deeper in India than in England.

This is not a people's war but a war against the people. Then why should we fight brutal and bloody battles to their dictation and suffer colossal losses to no purpose? Why should we fight for the British and die undocumented? Why should India bleed and share the tragedy and futility of the war? Is our blood being spilt and our manpower tragically wasted by them as an earnest for giving us independence? If so, why did not they give it after World War I?

The British always fight a collective war with our men and money as they are incapable of fighting any all alone. They manoeuvre other nations into battle. They have no steel in their make-up. They know little of scientific warfare. Their knowledge of science is limited to rehashing Germany's discoveries.

All our resources have been geared to the war effort, What an irony, the whiteman's war is our worry. It is their war but its peripheral affects us too much. It is Indians who got them victory on many fields. It is we coloured people who have lionised every Tom, Dick and Harry in the two wars. But then it is we who are the victim of our successes in these wars. The whiteman has bled us white. We helped him to win World War I abroad and we lost the same to him at home. We are now war-weary. We have sorry tales to tell. The country is burning and bleeding. Our death-toll has

been the heaviest in the two worst world slaughters. We have counless mauled and mangled bodies, broken hearts and broken homes, weeping widows with empty bellies, wearing shapeless rags, tattered and torn. Our people are smarting under disabilities. Necessities of life have become scarce, though plentiful on the black-market. It is blackmarketeers who are profiting enormously by the war. It is why we loathe wars.

We want to be left in peace. It is immaterial to us as to who are the doves and who the hawks or who wins and who loses it. What to us if the war lapses for the Allies or for the the Axis? To us, the war means more poverty. It is a naked struggle for more power of one and more poverty of the other. The strong prey on the weak. We are in war, though not at war. Both the belligerents give us bullets—the Axis do this in the field, the Allies at home. Britain has done nothing to deserve the sacrifice of a single Indian. It is because of this that we display anti-war films, revues and exhibitions of their atrocities.

One of the virtues of a war is that is gives an opportunity to a slave country to throw away a foreign rule. The war has given us the chance of the century. We must cash in on this opportunity and exploit the polarisation between the Axis and the Allies. This is the most suitable time and clime now that they they are bogged down in an unending war. The chips are down between them with the Japanese so close to India as Burma. Britain stands mauled and mired in the war. We fight for peace. We fight for freedom. We will achieve our objective. The war and slavery are knawing at the conscience of our people. Wars are followed by social and political revolutions. The movement involves our moral as well as physical test.

(The war dominated his conversation and he returned to it time and again).

I : We have peace in war.

Spy : Yes, troubled peace. It is phoney peace we have in war. The war is our worry at home. Taxes have gone up. We buy our peace.

I : What would be the policy of an independent India towards wars ?

Spy : An independent India would pull her chestnuts out of the fire blazed by foreigners and observe pragmatic neutralism. We'll outlaw wars. We believe in the

renunciation of war ever since Budha and Asoka set examples of Ahinsa (non-violence) in the third century B. C. Our people want peace. The British Government had better get out of their way and let them have it.

We'll wage only defensive wars. Preparation for such wars shall be made in time of peace. We must be strong as weakness is the shortest road to war. Any nation that has bread, men and machine is sure to win any war. We'll always keep men and material ready to ensure peace through defensive wars.

I : You appear to be absolutely blank in Indian history. Hindu India has been a militaristic and warring country down the centuries. The Buddhist and Asokan India has been no exception. Hindu scriptures sanctify aggressive and expansionist wars.

(To bear this out, one cannot do better than quote the Hindu scholar referred to in the foregoing Chapter I as author of the book "The Wonder that India Was":—

> ". . . . . . war was generally accepted as a normal activity of the State, even by Buddhist Kings. The doctrine of non-violence. . . . . . was never at this time taken to forbid war or capital punishment. The intense militarism of ancient India (however) did not lead to the building of a permanent empire over the whole sub-continent . . . . . . Page 123.

"According to the Arthsastra, there are three types of conquest (*i*) righteous conquest, (*ii*) conquest for greed and (*iii*), demoniac conquest. The first is conquest in which the defeated King is forced to render homage and tribute....... The second is victory in which enormous booty is demanded and large portions of enemy territory annexed. The third involves the political annihilation of the conquered kingdom and its incorporation in that of the victor. The two latter types are generally disapproved by all *except the Arthsastra* (the italics are by the writer) Page 124.

". . . . The Arthsastra looks on conquest of the demoniac variety as the most profitable and advisable ......page 125."

"At all times conquest was the chief ambition of the Indian Kings. Even Asoka, who abjured aggressive war, did not given up the hope of conquest. The position is succinctly put by the Arthsastra. The King who is weaker

than the other should keep the peace ; he who is stronger should make war......page 125."

"War is a continuation of policy by other means. Its purpose is not glory but wealth and power.......There are many other ways of gaining power, intrigue and assassination among them, and these should always be resorted to in preference to war, which should only be looked on as a last resort......(page 125).

"In this critical climate it is not surprising that interstate relations were of the most machiavellian character. The basic concept which governed the relations of one King with another was the Doctrine of Circles....The King on whose territory the circle is centred is known as "he who desires conquest" (*i.e.* he is the invader). The King whose territory adjoins that of the would-be conqueror is the enemy. . . . ; when he (the enemy) is in trouble he must be attacked ; when he has little or no help he must be uprooted, otherwise he must be harrassed and weakened. Beyond the enemy lies the friend, the natural ally of the conqueror. . . . . Beyond the friend is the enemy's friend and beyond him the friends' friend (so on and so forth). . . . The main purpose of this enumeration is clear—a King's neighbour is his natural enemy, while the king beyond his neighbour is his natural ally. The working of this principle can be seen throughout the history of Hindu India in the temporary alliances of two kingdoms to accomplish the encirclement and destruction of the kingdoms between them......(page 127)."

". . . . . . Devastation of the crops to weaken the enemy was quite legitimate according to the (Hindu religious) text books. . . . . . . the peasants could never feel wholly safe from raiders. . . . the townsmen (too) could rarely feel altogether secure against the looting and exactions of enemy occupation. Conditions in Hindu India were not unlike those in medieval Europe. . . . . In Europe, however, the well-organised and centralised Roman Church often acted as a pacifying element in the situation ; in Ind a Hinduism, which had no all-embracing super-national organisation, rather encouraged inter-state anarchy by incorporating many martial traditions into the Sacred Law (*i.e.* Hindu religious books) ......(pages 127—128).

"Many competent authorities, led by Sir R. Mortimer Wheeler, now believe that . . . . . the forts or citadels

which the Vedic war-god Indra is said to have destroyed included Harappa. . . . ."page 128.

The strategy of present-day Hindu India is exactly in consonance with that of ancient India as enjoined by the Arthsastra. The neighbouring countries are treated as enemies and their neighbours as friends. The India of today is in reality the goddess of war much more than her male namesake, Indra, of the Vedic mythology).

I : None of the two World Wars is of Britain's seeking. She doesn't want fresh wars. She is a satisfied and surfeited Power.

Spy : The Allied publicity media blare to the world that "Hitler is cruel, Goebbels a braggart and Goering an evil genius". But I say that there is only one Hitler, one Goebbels and one Goering in the entire history of Germany, nay, in the history of the whole world, past as well as present. What about Britain, a country choking with countless prototypes of Hitler, Goebbels and Goering, sucking human blood in peace and spilling human blood in wars wherever they went, and they went every-where, down the centuries? It is the British brutal boors and British buccaneers who have fought against humanity, committed countless orgies of massacres, wrought havoc and destruction of civilizations, disintegration of great empires and dynasties, carried death and disease and made myriads of widows and orphans the world over.

In the words of Napoleon "The British are a nation of shopkeepers". Yes, they are a nation of most cruel and callous shopkeepers dealing in blood and tears with their slave customers, a nation of chronic colonists and rapacious and capricious imperialists who filch every bit of foreign territory. An investigation into any world event will prove them to have always been the vanguard villains of all wars and scars made on the face of this earth. They will be found in a large number of cases to have acted as wirepullers, initial instigators, subtle intriguers and blackguard conspirators. But it is the irony of history that these playback criminals have always gone unpunished. It must be one of the unexplored wonders of the world how imperceptibly these abominable culprits slip from the dock into the role of complainants and prosecutors.

I : India is sure to get some political status very soon for her services in the war. But as to full independence

it may be long, may be never, in view of the acute communal tension and political differences existing among the various parties.

Spy : We are the victim of our own sacrifices and successes in the two World Wars fought by the British with our blood. The British bleed us at home as well as abroad. We helped them, as we do, to achieve easy victory only to have uneasy peace. They do not give us anything beyond empty pacts which are nothing but sops full of mischievous balderdash and diversionary tactics and propaganda squibs to delay our independence. The perseverance shown by them in perverse policies is remarkable. They skirt issues and trap flies with honey. They are double-faced and double-handed, possessing an outrageous talent for bargaining with their soap-box oratory and easy and roseate promises abounding in artful gimmicks, bizarre banalities, fantastic ambivalence and vague platitudes. They have small fame for fairplay. They talk fancy farce. We have seen enough of these people with clean faces, dirty minds and tortuous tantarums. They are extremely elusive autocrats, aristocrats and bureaucrats. The chronic colonial rule has produced tyrants, despots and demagogues who forswear principles and stall on their pledges. They turn from principles to expediency. But the triumph of expediency over principles is always temporary. Everything they offer conceals hooks and catches. The repeated breach of pacts has rightly aroused frustration among the people.

The entire history of these world policemen is peppered with catchy and sketchy promises. Every time they make promises they come out with a dictat, falling back on the usual cliche that Indians do not deserve what they demand. No country has been so much lied about as India. They dupe and dope us and put up cynical pretexts for sinister motives to dilute whatever little they dole out. They play on all sides of every fence. They walk both sides of the street and move semantically from their previous postures. They whittle down their commitments to milk-and-water versions. They brutally abandon facts and acts without turning a hair. They possess great powers in making and breaking promises and transforming their pacts into funeral flowers.

They used the League of Nations as a Trojan Horse and broke its legs too. What grates on our minds is that they never live their words. They seldom match fair

words with honest deeds. They never concede in practice what they promise in public. They do not give formally what they admit informally. Whatever semblance of Home Rule they give us piecemeal is little more than an injection of slow political poison. The much-heralded autonomy has turned out to be a big hoax. It is why we draw little comfort from the paper pacts and half-cock promises. They lap these gigantic bluffs with colour and gumption. The pacts are nothing but blank-range killing kisses and political exercises to buttress their stand and stay. None of the pacts so far made is anything more than a red-herring.

The British are more tactful than truthful. They have nothing but an outrageous treachery to offer. They are the longest lived liars. All their pacts are living lies, tactical ploys which give us nothing but cold comfort, loaded, as they are, with escape-clauses. We know too well the agonising gap between their words and deeds to pin any faith in their rusty political ploys.

Downing Street selects astute hoaxers. Hats off to these masters of diplomatic prevarication. It takes a man's age to discover their duplicity. Our stomachs are now delicate enough to swallow their too familiar tricks in wishy-washy tinkerings. We only admire the subtle and super-human wickedness of these egg-heads and round-heads whose politics beats their promises. Gandhiji has rightly remarked that a sprawling serpent has entwined India, that we are trying to extricate ourselves from the coil of that serpent, famous for its infamous trappings and that we must shut out every serpent from our paradise.

I endorse Gandhiji throughout. A snake can sneak one bite but this snake has been biting us all the time sitting over its treasure trove for over a century. We have been the victims of its frightful fangs many a time. The British, like a snake, have no feet. We won't let them hit and run away any more. We have seen them through hindsight.

(Dr. Josiah Harlon, an American who served Maharajah Ranjit Singh as Governor with his head-quarters at Gujrat during the mid-decades of the 19th century, made the following observations on the English in his book entitled "A Memoir of India and Afghanistan" :—

"In the beginning those who now govern India were an association of traders, a body of commercial adventurers, a band of hucksters, natives of a small

contemptible island in the Western Ocean. Having tasted the luxuries of Asia, (they) enjoyed the profits of a voyage to India and beheld the munificent rivers of wealth which flooded from exhaustless sources. These future conquerors slowly and submissively with unpretending humility solicited permission to trade with their dominions.

"The feeble Indians simply cherished with hospitable designs the starving snake which was to bask hereafter in their vitals, to batten on the blood of their people and to fertilize futurity with the plunder of their treasure. The Indians say that they (English) carved only enough land as might be enclosed by a cowhide. The favour was granted but the claimants artfully shredded their hide into strings, thus artfully enclosing a considerable space upon which a factory or fort was erected and they became for 150 years the unmolested possessors of a malignant plague spot on the disc of a threatened empire".

Baba Kharak Singh (literally : a grandpa roaring lion), one of the tremendously respected Sikh leaders, many a time jailed for his anti-British speeches, repeatedly dubbed Britain as the most treacherous country in the world. He often amused his audience by his highly disparaging remarks :

"If France were wiped off the face of the world, fashion and art would come to an end ; if Germany were eliminated, science and technology would come to an end and if Britain were annihilated, treachery and butchery would come to an end.

"Britain is a tiny noxious dragon, endlessly treacherous and facinorous. She has come to the legendary dance of the scorpion—just before she stings herself to death. We are dickering to deliver the country from her and to help expedite her deathly dance. We won't tolerate the tender mercies of these butchers any more."

(cf. "The worst British quality is a kind of kindness that causes more cruelty in the end" (Richard Crossman).

(An English daily has quoted a Dr. Ramsay as saying, ostensibly condemning apartheid:

"South Africans are no more wicked than we are in England. We're pretty wicked in England. It's just that certain historical forces have brought about this sad tragedy").

("To the, I hope, limited extent that we are a criminal nation we are a nation of thieves, not a nation of thugs"—Lord Stonham.)

"(The British have enjoyed a great reputation for past few centuries in the cloak—and dagger business", says a London correspondent of an English Daily).

(Mr. Ian Stephens, a former Editor of the Statesman in a letter to "The Daily Telegraph" criticised the British Government, the British Press and the British Broadcasting Corporation for deliberately "applying different standards", one in favour of British interests and the other diametrically reverse to the first against those of a foreign country "on aspects of the same topical subject". He says, *inter alia*, that;

"Perhaps we British are not, in fact, quite such hypocrites or muddleheads as logical-minded Frenchmen and other foreigners are won't to suggest")

The British are a nation of hypocrites, traditional tyrants with wicked heads and brutal hands. The very name of Britain is the equivalent of a predatory heirarchy of habitual exploiters and killers in colonial argot, which would make even the angels puke. The British colonialism is a scourage worse than plague. We won't tolerate the British to use our fight for freedom as an excuse to prolong that plague. It is their treachery that has awakened us to the truth that everything British is no better than brass trinkets.

Callous colonists, as they are, have policies but no principles. Honesty is the best policy, they say. They talk of honesty in terms of policy. Why don't they say: Honesty is the best principle? Honesty should be for the sake of honesty, morality and ethics. Policy is the anti-thesis of honesty. It is another name for craftiness. They do not practise even what they profess in their hypocritical saying. Had they been as good as their professions, the tiny island would have not wrought havoc in her ill-gotten colonies. God save the king, his kingdom and his sprawling Empire, whatever the cost, whatever the consequences to Adams' down-trodden progeny. This is their policy, their honesty, their principle!

There is a tale often told of Africa. Once an African was travelling by air. The air-hostess brought him the menu card, requesting him to select items to his taste. Finding nothing to his likes, he remarked: What is there for me to select? Bring me the list of passengers so that I could make my choice for my lunch!

If at all the terrible tale is true, Africans are more human than the British. The Africans kill and eat up. That's the end of it. The British esurient wolves do it with a difference. They would suck the blood of a whole nation, suffer it to live and linger, lie and die in anguish and agony, slowly, steadily and surely! The tyrannies and villainies of these beasts of prey are legion and lasting.

I: Why this character assassination of a whole nation?

Spy: Where is the character?

Nowhere! The promotors of the creeping cancer of colonialism, the enslavers of whole nations, the exploiters of their resources, the war-lords of unprovoked international battles and the givers of death and bereavements to millions of innocent people are moral outlaws, devoid of all character. We should have advised them to revise their character if only they had any. They have none to be revised or repealed. What is happening in our country today is the pay-ff of their age-long perfidy and paucity of character. It is not mere paucity but total vacuum and wilderness of character. England is a country of parasites and spongers devoid of a "compunction of conscience". In the circumstances, any question of assassination of character does not arise at all.

I: Your answer is wholly unparliamentary and the acrimonious language absolutely unfair and unjust.

Spy: My answer is not mine. This is not the ravings of a disgruntled individual. This is what a veteran Sikh leader has publicly declared time and again. This is what the whole slave India says. Even slaves have character but these masters of mockery none. Ours' is a struggle of humanity against inhumanity.

I: The target of your scathing assault seems to be the political character of the British rulers of India. Isn't it?

Spy: Is one's political character different from one's moral character? Aren't the two identical? If not, isn't one influenced by the other? But then it is not unoften that a very good moralist is a very bad politician and *vice versa.* We often see rakes as politicians of great integrity and principles. We also see politician notorious for political corruption as staunch nationalists of undoubted patriotism and piety.

The British are nationalists devoid of all moral and political character. They believe in balance of power. But they do not believe in balance of character.

(Author: Nothing is good or bad in a nation but prejudices and precedents make it so.

"The English race are reputed morose" says R. W. Emerson. A morose person is generally conservative and impervious to the inroads of cupid, leasure and pleasure.

A Mr. Pierce Danionos, writing under "How can a Person Not Be French" quotes a William Marmaduke Thompson C. S. I., D. S. O.; U. B. E., as saying, *inter alia*, "Frenchmen run after women; Englishmen merely run across them" (Page 527—Readers' Digest "Fun and Laughter.") Apart from the fun and frivolity intended by the writer, the quotation implies a sweeping smear of one and an all-out clear of the other. Morality and immorality, more or less, keep their level throughout the sexual world. The English Channel intervening between France and Britain is too narrow a strip in the shrinking world of today to keep away what may be good or bad in one from the other to warrant an awfully invidious wholesale blackballing.

The two latest sex scandals in Britain during the Conservative Governments of Messrs Harold Macmillan and Edward Heath, in which the highest brass of the Treasury Benches within the span of a single decade unabashedly plugged the leaks in the lowest strata of the weaker vessel, provide ample proof of the putrid pudding, thereby testifying that Englishmen, however conservative and morose they may be, do not always run across women but every now and then do run through them down the stinking gutter no less than other nationals. It follows that all Frenchmen do not run after women nor do all Englishmen run across them.

"Money, not sex, is the object of what puritanism survives in the British character" says Ivan Yates. This again is an overstatement quite the other way round. Bad exceptions prove the good rule and good the bad. Categorical contrasts wholly condemning one and commending the other are dangerous.

It is extremely significant to note that the public scale of values in vice scandals generally and the two sex scandals in Britain particularly differ from person to person, from society to society and from time to time. While the Profumo scandal had rocked and ultimately sapped the very foundations of the Macmillan Government, the scandal involving the two Ministers-Lord Jellicoe and Lord Lambton in the Heath Government seems to have blown over. Again, while Profumo

throughout falsely protested innocence both in and out of the parliament, the two Lords have publicly confessed with an unusual candour their liaisons with prostitutes. The same leader of the Opposition, Mr. Wilson, who had made immense political capital and pinpointed betrayal of state secrets against the Macmillan Government, has played the issue of the second scandal straight. The Press and the public, too, who had kicked up much dust and reduced visibility in the Profumo case, have evinced unusual tolerance to the subsequent scandal involving political potentialities twice over. Why all this difference and indifference? Why Macmillan fell and Heath survived? Is it that morals and moral values have gone retrograde inside a decade in these permissive days?

Prostitution is rampant, more or less, all over the world. Under-cover involvement of prostitutes in public services is in evidence in varying degrees everywhere. But nowhere in the world has prostitution taken such a heavy toll of top executives as in Britain. Lords and Ministers, shedding all fears and formalities, stepped down to the lowest level of hoodlums and other scums of society, a motley of strange fellow-travellers, sharing between themselves the dirty beds of lachers, as if unwittingly forging a new common market, a new brand of socialism and communism in the midst of a die-hard capitalism, a limited modesty in the midst of a limited monarchy.

Prostituiton is now an all-time and all clime ever-ready bumper cash crop, fabulously lucrative, minting money by the minute darkly under read light. It is no longer a limited institution, a privilege of a few scamps. Its incidence is endemic, its contageon catastrophic, far deeper and far speedier, much more wide-spread and many times worse than the havoc and fall-out of any nuclear weapon, howsoever sophisticated and strong it may be. It has broken all caste-and-status barriers and come out of its red and dark hide-out into the open, the public parks, pubs and clubs, public roads and streets, schools and colleges. According to a spokesman for the protection of unborn children, more than 70 school girls under the age of 16 have abortions every week in England and Wales, exclusive of other parts of the United Kingdom. The total number of abortions of this age-group has gone up well over 50,000 (Pakistan Times dated 15th June 1973). The grand total of abortions of higher age-groups is anybody's guess. Immoral cess-pools are spilling over beyond repair.

But why do Peers board the weakest vessel, dread leakage and get drowned? Why shed tears over milk spilt beyond all recovery? Why "love me, love my bitch"? Why not revert to "love me, love my dog"? Why not shun the notorious lass and love the lad in a country where the latest licencious law makes it free for all and natural to commit an unnatural offence? Why such a lewd law at all? Was it to relieve the excessive demand on the limited supply of the fair sex by the common market that the law-makers played the law-breakers by opening virgin vistas of males pitched against males? Perhaps. May be it has national advantages: no security risk as, barring Sodom, no foreigner seems to be interested in such a beastly, in fact unbeastly, abominations—unbeastly because beasts never do such manly, rather unmanly, indecencies. Maybe, it involves no legal action. Above all, it carries no scandals. Abortion, which detracts from health and wealth and smears the female and her family on the one hand and the adulterer and his family on the other, is no problem in sodomy; What a freedom in the free world! Isn't the evolution from mouse and monkey to man now in a reverse gear? Why no protests from the women-folk? Isn't it worse than the much maligned bigamy and polygamy? Why no protests from the Church in a Protestant country? Isn't all this the bane of separation of the Church from the State? Put together, prostitutes, unmarried mothers, sodomists and catamites make quite a splash in a small island. In the circumstances, no amount of assurances of justice could allay the fears of the spy of being subjected to an unfair deal by nationals playing unfair to both the sexes in their own country).

I: Whatever your grounds of grouse against the British for our slavery, it would be too much to denigrate everything British.

Spy: We are uncompromisingly opposed to everything that has British flavour. Slaves, as we are, should skip everything British, particularly when everything Indian has lapsed. We are intensely Indian and enjoy being Indian. We are fighting British institutions, not individuals. We are sloughing old loyalties, scrapping the past and playing down everything British.

Briefly, the whites are colourless and treacherous, a cloak-and-dagger outfit with a cat-and-mouse friendship. But they can't mute our demands by such devious devices and wily veneers. We won't accept democracy in

disgraceful driblets. We won't tolerate interminable delays nor shall we allow ourselves to be coaxed into anything less than complete independence. It is why we are not taken by their pretensions any more. We have burnt our fingers many a time. It is why we set no store by the niceties of their awards which hardly give us even a fragile consolation. They have given us local government to the parody of peoples' government. The facile promises made only the other day are already antiques. Pretensions are never justifiable. However, pretensions are justifiable if you sustain them so long that you *become* what you pretend. The British have all along pretended but never become what they pretended. It is not their fault. It is just the way they are made. But with all their somersaults, they can't survive our movement. The policies adopted by them are too flabby to resist our force. They shall have to turn authority to us and depart.

AN ADDLED ADMINISTRATION

I: Why do you roundly condemn this fair and square administration run by the world's most civilised intellectuals free from local prejudices? It is these intellectuals who have imparted a vast learning to an ignorant people. Any amount of corrosive criticism and smear campaign won't be helpful. People who are a failure in various vocations have started an odious agitation.

Spy: This is a cavalier regime, an addled administration headed by blissful bureaucratic drunks ruling over dazed dozers. All liquor-addicts are incorrigibly corrupt—morally, materially, politically and/or mentally. A liquor-addict can never do justice. He is morally insane and materially dishonest. He can never be straight in his case work and his dealings with the public. He is the custodian of corruption. He cultivates corruption like a gardener cultivating thorny flowers. A tipsy public servant is dishonest to his duty, his family and the public. He is sick in mind and body. Can a sick man, propped by an illicit intoxicant, discharge his duty efficiently or honestly? No, never. No person with the least or last drop of liquor in his stomach can have all the five senses about him at one time or another. When wine is in, wit is out.

Wine and women and drinks and drunks and debauchery go together. Drink and drug rackets are plentiful. Corruption is organised. Ties of corruption

are undetachable. Similarly, ties of immorality are unbreakable.

We ape the British, these wine-bibbers, chronic tipplers. We dress like Englishmen, live like Englishmen, drink like Englishmen, behave like Englishmen and, worst of all, wish we were Englishmen.

Specific instances can be given to bear out this contention. I know of certain low-caste alcoholic guys—dyers, beggars, butchers, barbers, weavers, washermen, potters and a host of other menials, who have outgrown their spurious genealogy and sneaked into various blue-blooded castes overnight and worked their way up in the senior services by dint of wine and women, illicit intimacies with maid-servants and dancing and singing girls and stinking prostitutes and, at the same time, built palatial sky-scrapers, wallowing in abominable wealth and filthy lucre extorted from public pests, corrupt industrialists and businessmen, smugglers, black-marketeers, swindlers, murderers and other criminals involved in offences against person and property. I know of certain high officials who, because of their corruption and other repulsive qualifications, should have been in jails but who, by the strangest freaks of wine and women, sit in judgment on the fate of their fellow criminal community, fleecing or freeing them at will.

No officer, with the least compunction of conscience, would like his name to be bracketted with a prostitute, but, to be sure, I have seen with my own eyes through the good offices of a friend in the Excise and Taxation Department, names of heads of certain departments and senior judicial and executive officers of the Central Services mentioned in a common list, bearing consecutive serial numbers with certain prostitutes, whoremasters and convicts and criminals, giving particulars of their liquor permits along with the quantity of liquor allowed to be consumed per head per mensem. We should have only one bar, the learned lawyers' legal bar and no liquor-bar at which certain alcoholic officers and prostitutes rub shoulders at par. What common disease is that from which these extremes of society—stinking scums and elevated drunks—suffer alike? The disease has no name! Neither the medical certificates issued by the examining doctors nor the liquor permits issued by the Excise authorities mention the disease. The recommendation invariably made by the doctors is that a certain quantity of liquor is a dire necessity to save the life of the person concerned. The disease is kept strictly

secret. The medicine is the same for the young and old, pros and big toad, in every season, hot and cold—liquor.

We are a poor country. We have hard drunks. Let the drunks die if they can't do without liquor. We can't afford this bankrupting luxury to lend improvised life to dying debauches, these suited, booted and hatted dacoits looting us in broadday light. They would die without liquor. They drink themselves to death with liquor. It is death in either case, with as well as without liquor. Then why not let these drunken reprobates and depraved profligates die without liquor to save ourselves from bankruptcy and the drunk's dishonesty and debauchery?

No Officer, whatever his pay or position, can afford to buy this costly commodity with his honest income. It is, as often as not, tainted money extorted from litigants and parties to cases that makes these dirty drunks go. It is why corruption, like air, is rampant everywhere. We inhale corruption. We exhale corruption. It is shielded and patronised corruption. It is the senior officer, the immediate supervising officer, who promotes and perpetuates corruption at the source. Corruption is a skyhigh tree with its roots at the top. It is big fish that eats up everything. Big fish is protected by bigger fish. Corruption is more powerful than anti-corruption. Corruptlon can punish anti-corruption. It is lack of punishment of top toads and high hats that compounds corruption still further. It is the senior officers who play dirty. We shall reverse the scales in an independent India and drown quite a few of the top brass into the deep sea to clear the decks of the chronic and corroding corruption. Already, Bacchus has drowned Adam's progeny more than Neptune.

No alcoholic should be recruited or retained in any Government or public service. It would deter and discourage a public pest in Government service a good deal if it is made a must for him to seek out Government permission through proper channel before he can take out a permit to drink and degenerate into atrocious immorality.

I : True, you are talking Islam which enjoins strict prohibition and condemns liquor as the "mother of all evils." It follows that a man who has the mother of all evils in his stomach is the "father of all evils"!

Liquor kills conscience, morals and all sense of justice and fairplay. Drunks never do anything in conscience.

A liquor-addict, whatever his vocation, is dirty in conscience, dirty in mind and body and dirty in his duty and dealings with the public. In my view, a liquor-addict judicial officer commits contempt of court as well. He desecrates the sanctity of the court by his very presence with his stomach, tongue and talk, always emitting, more or less, a nauseating smell of the irreligious intoxicant. Addiction to liquor constitutes misconduct and flagrant disregard of God-made and man-made laws and law courts. A Government of a country professing to be a theocratic State commits all these contempts by appointing to, and/or retaining in, any public office a known liquor-addict. A tipsy head of an institution, administration or organisation, patronises and perpetuates corruption whatever his loud lament or tall professions and promises made for public consumption may be. Corruption is contageous. Drunks defend drunks. They are invariably moral and physical wrecks and security risks. They are sitting ducks for heart attacks. Therefore, addiction to liquor is a sufficient physical and moral inability in a public servant to do his duty satisfactorily and honestly. Drinking and duty and drinking and dignity cannot go together. Drunks are seldom sober or straight in their talk, walk or work.

A Medical expert, Dr. Anwarul Haque, in his article "Drug Addiction On Upswing" says, *inter alia*, that ;

"Alcoholic beverages have prohibitive prices which nobody can afford to pay . . . . Addiction raises barriers to obscenity and lowers inhibitions . . . . Girl addicts, to be able to purchase drugs, take to street soliciting, visit houses of assignation and ultimately land themselves in red-light areas. They swell the ranks of unwed mothers and illegitimate children, serve as reservoirs of venereal diseases and pose a great challenge to sexual morality. There is hardly a crime which the addicts do not commit and no moral degradation to which they do not stoop to get money to buy drugs. Virtually, all addicts are criminals and morally depraved persons . . . . . Alcohol suppresses social inhibitions and lets loose animal tendencies. . . . . . Once an addict always an addict. There is no guarantee of cure of a confirmed addict. No medical facility exists for the treatment of addicts."

This is what says a doctor. The religious divines are all the more bitter and categorically condemn liquor as "Sharaab Khaana Kharaab"—liquor liquidates homes. destroys families. Ask any Muslim, any Christian, any believer in any revealed religion, if it is not a fact that intoxicants of every conceivable description are among his

religious inhibitions. The answer would be an emphatic and authentic "Yes". Then why profess one thing and practise another ? Any person who professes one thing and practises another is definitely corrupt by his own beliefs.

However long and loud the pretexts, protests or pleadings on one plea or another, alcohol makes females prostitutes and males whoremasters, debauches, adulterers sodomites and catamites. Alcohol makes both the sexes dishonest and, to a certain degree, however little, demented.

The British administration is not upto scratch. This is a dilapidated administration past its peak, a shell of what once it was. The sordid and tousled affairs of the administration are now the talk of the people everywhere. Decay and disorder have set in due to the British officer's passion for undiluted power. This is a regimented regime of virtual Czars, too heady to listen to reason, weilding unhedged power without responsibility, ruling largely by an orgy of mortifying ordinances signed into law and rolled out of the Viceregal palace, as if the Democles Defence of India Rules were not enough to gag us or drag us into the foreigners father-in-laws house. The ordinances are shot-gun laws and dictatorial short-cuts to ride roughshod. This is how the whites pass black laws daily. But they won't be able to return a violent society to law by such bad laws. The ruler and the ruled are fast drifting apart. The regime is an adjunct to the British Crown rather than a forum for the people. It is divorced from the people, suffering, as it does, from a sense of the discouraging distance between Delhi and London. Everything is done to orders from London. The top brass from England controls the apex of power and exercises it with flinty authority. Too many Napoleans are strutting our streets. Only a few odd Englishmen rule a sprawling country. It is why tuppenny Johnnies behave in derogatory overtones as tinpot Cromwells, Uncle Sams, Big Brothers, always keeping a distance from us. They live in aristocratic seclusion, deride and shun us, giving us a caddish and subhuman treatment. We are discarded and disregarded. Barring a few coloured members of the Indian Civil Service, who are pretty high but who make humiliating figures, every Deputy Commissioner, the kingpin of the administration, is British. All Britishers have bigger jobs, heavier pays and fewer working hours. Everytime and everywhere a

small closed cadre of Englishmen act as major-domos of a governing body, holding posts of any importance. They have only a few Indians into the Government at higher levels. But due to the machinations of wily British administrators, there is no horizon for Indians. No Indian can ever rise higher than the lowest Britisher. All menial and manual jobs are traditionally held by lower income Indians. This is in spite of the fact that Indian officers are worth every bit of thousands being paid to British officers. We firmly believe that one-to-one Indian brains can beat the ablest Britisher to a frazzle and that anything that a Britisher can do an Indian can do better and make the grade with all his handicaps. We have brilliant brains who outshine them in intellect and intelligence.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is only because of unlimited powers enjoyed by them that British officers are aggressive, demanding, and domineering, taking Indians too much for granted. They have lost all codes of behaviour in public. They bluster and bully people and flaunt their power. We are completely dominated by boss rule. The big bosses have such a stultifying hand in everything and mesmerise us so much that we have ceased to think for ourselves. They order our private lives from Whitehall. Everything we do is British oriented. Everything Indian has gone retrograde. There is an all-round regress, no progress. Whatever name you give it, it is simply staggering. Red tape continues to create snarls and snafus.

This is a hideously, a monstrously expensive rule, cumbersome, sluggish and clumsy juggernaut. It is saturated with stinking corruption, oppressive taxes and hefty expenditures. We are taxed out of existence. These are among the factors making for its unpopularity. It leaves just dribbles of large amounts collected from various sources for public purposes. The people have developed a profound mistrust of authority and teasingly call it "Tom Raj". The once ubiquitous image and decoying charm of Englishman stand sullied. The gap between the Government and the governed is growing staggeringly wide and the relations between the two are snapping under strain. The ruler and the ruled have drawn apart. The people have ceased to kow-tow before their foreign masters. The exaggerated respect which had spoiled them has vanished. They lustily hate them and eagerly want Indian rule both in texture and taste.

Under the law, a Government has no power to discriminate. It should be all or none. A ruler should be colour blind. But the British are blatantly colour-conscious, anti-black, bad mixers, always speaking with their tongues in their cheeks. We are treated as pariahs in our own country. Justice lies bleeding in India. The British are partial but they have no partiality for truth and justice. They are neutral between right and wrong. This is another name for injustice.

All this because colour counts. The British are white. We are coloured. So, we have nothing in-between but differences ; nothing common but everything in conflict with them. There can never be a meeting of minds between us. The whites never go native. They never socialise with us. While Indians of certain creeds inter-marry, the British seldom allow such relationship across the colour line out of morbid fear of miscegenation. We don't want whites. We want everything coloured. It should be our colour. We'll brook no discrimination or dictation.

The British give us too little of what we want and too much of what we do not want. As they say, it is bad to give water to the drowning man. We want freedom. They give us bullets and bayonets. We say this, not by dogmatic assertion but, by actual experience of them. The whole policy is keyed to their own welfare. This is a hostile and heretic Government swayed by race and rancour. It is why events have outrun their policies. Deshbhagats have discovered where Indians belong. We will get tnem their rightful place, whatever the pleas and policies of the Government may be.

It has been alleged that people who were a failure in various vocations have started an odious agitation. The revolution, too, has been alleged to be the work of a few louts. Yes, whether we are louts or liberators, we will presently show.

Though weak, the British are still despotic enough to snap their fingers at any patriot. The people have no representatives in the Government. They ask: why this rule over the many by the few? They have been goaded to revolt by this ruthless regime and its rapacious officials. This is an awesome clash between East and West, a conflict between power and faith, between the offensive and defensive forces. Home Rule alone will funk violence, victimisation and discrimination.

It is not the whole truth to say that "the British are

civilised intellectuals, impartial and disinterested in local prejudices". The British are great intellectuals possessing high intelligence, no doubt, but certainly not "civilised", "impartial" or "disinterested" in local prejudices. We have it from their cruel conduct that they are anything but civilised. They may be impartial where their own national and political interest is not at stake. To quote an Englishman: Britain has no permanent enemies; she has no permanent friends; she has permanent interests. Like Britain, we do not believe in eternal enmity. If they quit, we would wish them well. Again, it is incorrect to say that they are disinterested in local prejudices. On the contrary, they encourage local and communal prejudices with intent to divide and rule. They are a sharp, shrewd and brainy people with too much of a head but no heart for subject races. They do too much thinking to have any time to act for slaves.

I : The whole panoply of your challenge to the Government and your under-assessment of its power and prestige are incorrect. The British have still had deep roots and respect in the country.

Spy : No, we have had straight accounts of what is happening in the country. The catalogue of their crimes is horrible. They have made our life insufferable. Everybody is reeling from their unfair deals. The whole country is now a Police State. Every patriotic is an offender in the eye of the British law. The Government clamps down heavily on hundreds of patriots and dumps them by truck-loads out of cities as the jails are too full to take any more. We will never obey such froward rulers from the moon. The British law and their big stick have no teeth for us. We feel glad to offend them and their laws. We care a rush for the terror of their laws. We are being accused of terrorism, subversion and sabotage—charges to which every deshbhagat is eager to plead guilty as evidence of his patriotism. It would, however, be gross simplification to ascribe the present movement to our activities alone. The whole country is with us. We are liberators versus conquerors.

We have loved them too long. But we have lately discovered that we had been wrongly reared to believe the British rule as something God-sent. We realize that it is we who have reared the administration and the administrator with abject servility. In fact, the British brainwashed us into believing we are political pigmies

incapable of looking after ourselves. They are now too weak to last any longer in tense times. Cracks have appeared in the administration. They know it. It is why they are keeping their fingers crossed. It is why they are now unusually edgy and yet emotionally reluctant to turn authority to the Indians. They have a negative record and done nothing for us. Right and opportunity co-exist. We have every right but no opportunity. We have come of age and want to be left alone to be ourselves, rough stones shaping into diamonds.

This is a grim and gloomy Government. The first flush of its face and image has faded. It is out of joint. It has failed to hold the line. The Police and the military are hard-pressed everywhere. They have recently heavily larded most of the civil posts with British militarymen and also drafted extra Police in troubled spots. But this has brought no relief. The Police and military have failed to make a dent at any of the fronts. It is in evidence that the Government visibly knuckles under our liberation movement. The revolution is moving faster than the Government. Nobody can deny that the Government is wobbly and that we are firm. We are acutely aware that today the British are not the power they were and that their administration is just a fragile web easy to rip. It is a mercenary administration addicted to money. It lacks strength, solidarity and stability. It has deteriorated into the tragic present. It is in its last breath, dying on its last legs. Britain is now an exhausted volcano. This looks like her last bid. The defeat of the last ditchers is imminent. Such a defeat at our hands would be about the most traumatic event that could happen to them in the last blaze of their glory. The forces which had swept them into power are now fighting them. These forces have jolted the ossified heirarchy. The one-time grandeur and glory of the British is fading fast.

I : What would be your attitude towards the Indian Princes in Indian India ?

Spy : We won't tolerate these dark horses of the King's party preserved by them as flank skirmishers to enfilade the Indian movement for freedom from all sides. We would warn these obsequious puppets and servile valets of British imperialism obsessed by an undue egomania and undiluted autocracy that they are too effete to stem the momentum of the movement. The States with ramshackle systems of administration are among the worst feudal enclaves in India under the fostering tutelage

of the British. Lately, however, the British Indian and the Indian States combine has considerably cribbed.

INDIA, A LONG LOOTED LAND

India is a farming country. Nature is abundant. We have a marvellously fertile and lush land, laced with a thousand streams yielding gold. It is a thriving agricultural and pastoral sub-continent with plentiful crops and flocks. It is fabulously rich in raw material. And yet it is not a boon country. It is a perfectly hungry land in the grip of downright famines. What an irony of fate: we cannot eat our own wheat and meat. The British loot our "Golden Sparrow—Granary of the East", and funnel home our food and finances, leaving a little more than subsistence stocks. All sorts of foodstuffs flee the country. They drain everything to the dregs, pluck all the fine flowers and swallow all that takes their fancy—fish, flesh and fowl.

Desperate and dreadful poverty besets the country which has deteriorated into a cesspol of the world because of its excruciating hunger. The masses are suffering from an overwhelming feudal poverty. The rich are waxing richer, the poor waning poorer. The British look after people who are well-looked after already. Our income *per capita* is reduced to a dribble. Our lives are running down the drain. Life is a tough trial. We are destitute and dehumanised, living with hope against hope in massive misery and dearth of every necessity of life. We want food and freedom and peace and clothes. We have little at present. It is the land of the farmer but he is the victim of plain tomfoolery. Our boys and girls are put to work at an early age in an abortive bid to help coax a living from the looted land. We are adequately led but poorly fed.

Experience has brought us wisdom about them. While we till and toil and die for a diem, the British live on the bottle. They wallow in reckless prosperity and we in desperate poverty. India is a soup-kitchen to them; a haven for their padres pouring in to help "civilize" us with their predatory missions. They have rifled our riches for a century. They have too much on their table and we too little in our stomach. They are stuffing themselves on our stocks for the extra pleasure and live in style in the midst of our misery and starvation and sorrow and sufferings. They are effete with lust and luxury, living high and princely lives in palatial bungalows with flashy cars and dozens of servants taking turns to wait on them. They do not know what it is to be poor. They have all the peaches-and-cream and we just humble pies. Two meals a day is a luxury enjoyed by the lucky few. Food is scarce and costly and death abundant and cheap. We are sliding into squalor while

they hold our money bags with millions on deposit in banks. The British boys bossing over us soak up our economy, peace and prosperity, becoming too big for their boots. We are being ground to poverty under their jackboot.

The British business-magnates, too, enjoy a bonanza with quick and ignoble profits that have transformed their sluggish trade into a roaring venture. They do blooming black business and achieve huge turnovers overnight. They have made India into a black-marketeers' paradise. They are adept at circumvention and sharp practices. They manoeuvre everything under-the-counter, pocket bloated profits. scrape fortunes and siphon them off to England. These economic gluttons have now more than enough to go, leaving indigenous trade and economy in jeopardy.

We are ill-nourished, ill-clad and ill-housed. This is so because our great and good country is being exploited by a small island of predatory priests, plundering peers, looting lords and robbing rulers, operating with a thousand faces. It is our trader-administrators from an island of evil who are draining us dry of every—thing, men, money and material. It is our men who fight and die to win wars for them. And yet it is the British who fleece us and then take their holidays in England. These holiday-makers have struck fabulous fortunes and enjoy junkets and pleasure picnics with their radiant brides to far-flung countries at our expense. They have had an excessive boom, getting all the plums of life both here and back at home. There is no ceiling to their wealth and no bottom to our poverty. We feed them and do the dishes for them. They have exploited India and other backward countries down the centuries, It is why this vast country is not big enough for us. It sears my heart to see such money-mad foreigners ruling us and looting us. We have been swamped in our own country by hordes of job-seeking outsiders.

On the contrary, tense of thousands of helpless Indians shuffle in the streets without jobs. We have children without hope and posterity without future. We are the poorest of the poor, slithering into a deep abyss of bankruptcy, famished and fed with yesterday's left-overs and wicked wastes. With nothing to live on, we live on every damn thing. We have inherited a critical situation in poverty. We have hungry hordes, the society's step-children, suffering from nutritional diseases. Hunger is the common language of the masses and poverty their politics. We are in the red, utterly insolvent. It is not possible to visualise when we would be able to balance our books and keep our nose above water. A state of uncertainty and alarm has overtaken us.

Our housing, education and medical care are skimped and inadequate. The housing problem is extremely acute. The people live in congested accommodation. Too many people sleep nights hobbled with their cattle in small rooms. Very often, they sleep six or seven to a room. Most of them live sky-clad just under the skies. They live in slums and shanties. Most of their shelters are just shacks made of undressed logs. A majority of them live literally across the tracks with no roads.

We are the victim of guarded ignorance. Illiteracy of the masses is awful. Our education is a misnomer. It is anything but geared to the requirements of the people. It stunts talent, turning out mercenaries for menial jobs. It swells unemployment. It converts us into illiterate servitors.

Medical dispensation is deplorable. Millions are racked and riddled with cruel diseases. Malnutrition has ravaged the masses. A sizeable percentage of the people has contracted active tuberculosis. Nothing is being done to stamp out this devastating scourage.

Why all this fantastic pleasure and abiding love for leisure enjoyed by the British bureaucrats at the expense of our degradation, degeneracy and economic slough of despondency? Why are we hungry in the midst of their pleasure and plenty in our own land? Veritable nightmares of recurrent famines erupt with terrible virulence. The ever-looming spectre of frequent famines stalking the land is much more deadly than death itself. The living envy the dead. Food supplies are shrivelling. A staggering rise in prices has zoomed inexorably and reached a record high most ominously. Our foreign exploiters have done nothing to hold the line on the shooting prices. Our people are dying of hunger. The survivors live precariously. They go about their lives pensively, unhappy and helpless. Toiling masses daily wobble their slow way to manual labour on foot. They have nothing against lean days, much less against lean seasons. Our privations and deprivations are legion.

The sufferings of one and splendour of the other are due to foreign exploitation. The British have caused us social paralysis and economic sabotage. Our society is made up of a few "too much haves" and countless "have littles" or "have nots". The country is vastly worse off in sore distress, spoiling for the barest essentials. Its economy is wilting, teetering on the edge of recession and depression in the absence of any resilience.

We have tight money and crimp in markets. Our imports outstripe exports manifold. The British sell us civil goods and manufacture military equipment with the sale proceeds to keep us in bondage. This has roused the ire of our people so much that the sardonic phrase "Buy British" has sumberged under the

outcry "Buy Sudeshi" (Buy indigenous). The intention is to compel Britain to lop off supplies of her costly goods to us. But with all this, it is not easy to banish hunger or ward off famines under a foreign rule. Our hard-core poverty and British imperialism have become endemic diseases, a backlash of corrupt colonialism. For all their blather, the British do not understand our dire needs and difficulties. They have given painful poverty in plentiful to our hapless land. Everything is gerrymandered to our disadvantage. Nowhere in the world is a government so affluent and a society so poor as in India. There is social and economic apartheid between the rulers and the ruled. The Whites hold everything against the coloured—power, purse and policy. Everything is keyed to their own welfare. They plundered; they thundered but now they worry.

If the British continue to inflict poverty and slavery on us, the country will go communist. It would be better for the coloured to go red than be bled white by the Whites. Our masters are materialists. Like communists, materialists have no religious inhibitions. I am not a communist. We Indians believe in religion which would get a short-shrift under communism. We are anti-pathetic to communism. We are for nationalism without its accompanying rag-tag and bobtail. But communism is the only answer to communalism and the disgraceful exploitation. With the imminent explosion of population we can have collective existence only.

Slaves, as we are, inherit all the cardinal vices of their masters, One of the much vaunted achievements of the British regime is the westernisation of our poor country. We actively denigrate westernisation. We don't tolerate the western version of our simple culture. Nudity and obscenity are the hallmarks of colonialism, capitalism, materialism, fascism and syndicalism. We are interested more in the technology than in the ideology of these corroding cults. The whole fabric of our oriental society is shredding under these abnoxious isms. Our social order has become dull and drab. They have bankrupted our character and country by upping our moral and material destruction. It is against this background that our hungry and angry people question us incessantly about our latest move in order to chronicle our headway day to day.

I: How do you blame the British when food consumption is ahead of production? We have baby booms, a runaway rate of population growth. This makes us a population giant but an economic midget. It is why food is falling behind population. It is why hunger entails slavery as its inevitable concomitant. The real

tragedy is not deaths but births. We should have new houses and few births.

Spy : Yes, millions are born into a hopeless deprivation. Disease and hunger, unemployment and squalor blight the country. We have a dark and dismal present and an anxious future. Population and poverty are our acute problems. We have bankrupting baby booms largely traceable to the laxity of morals in our society.

Little do we realise and little does the outside world know that the British have codified our society, imported immorality, corrupted our religion and perverted our culture. The existing English law legitimates illegitimates. Any birth during marriage is considered to be a conclusive proof of legitimacy, no matter how soon the birth be after the marriage or whether the conception or gestation occurred out of wedlock. Cases of pre-marital intimacy are on the increase in certain foreign countries where not one bride in two can claim innocence of sexual experience. We daily read scandals of seducers, flirts, ramps, jilts, coquettes, bums, drunken rowdies, fainting ladies and unmarried mothers. But for our religious and social inhibitions, we too would have had quite a progeny of bastards as one of the much publicised blessings of the British rule. Never has a colonial power given a a slave country such a repugnant law worse than pornography. Isn't it a tragedy that these civilised rulers should have given us a law which virtually makes prostitution a legal tender if only it unloads its illicit burden within seconds of a wedlock? Isn't it all the more tragic that our people should have put up with such an unlawful law for over a century without even a whisper in protest? Isn't it a contempt of our religions and courts to have suffered such a licentious law in our marital relations? Weren't the mutineers of 1857 more conscientious and more courageous than us in rising as one man against these very makers of law of the jungle over comparatively less explosive issues—fads and fats? Our unethical silence over unorthodox laws ever since their promulgation has been due to our moral degradation. The British have made us morally rotten, physically flabby and mentally deficient.

(This amounts to an attack on section 112 of the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, which lays down that birth during marriage is a conclusive proof of legitimacy and that it is the date of birth and not the date of conception which is the test of such legitimacy).

The law on gambling is disgracefully discriminatory. It incriminates gambling in all public and private places, however paltry the bets may be. It invidiously exculpates gambling on horse-races, involving millions of rupees and rack and ruin of families. It is penny wise and pound foolish. It legalises races on the plea that it is a game of skill. Whose skill? Skill of the horse or of the jockey, the bookie or the bettor? Is the irrational animal more skilful than the rational animal? Isn't the gambler as skilful as the jockey or his financier? Isn't "skill" a common denominator of gambling of all denominations?

When the law legalises one game of skill, why not others involving more skill, more cunning and more risk and running than the brawny horse and its brainy backers? Isn't every crime against person or property a game of greater skill? Aren't all kinds of crime—corruption, murders, dacoities, robberies, thefts, adultery and adulteration, espionage, treason, etc.—games of skill? They certainly are. Then why legalise one and penalise others? The invariable ingredient of every crime against property is unlawful gain of one and unlawful loss of the other, consent or no consent being immaterial. The offences of bribery and sodomy, for instance, do not cease to be offences even if committed with the consent of the parties concerned.

I : How do you know all this?

Spy : The anti-British propaganda agencies in the Far East pinpointed "Flaws in the English Laws in India" in their pamphleteering campaign. The English laws are very lenient and convenient to the lecher interested in wine and woman. Too many cases of abduction and seduction involving sex disintegrate families with little legal deterrent.

It is against this background that our hungry and angry hordes actively denigrade westernisation of our simple culture. Indians, who baulk at a mere kiss, now decry their coscience for tolerating such corrupting laws and corroding culture. When independent, we would revise these laws, so as to rehabilitate our morals.

I : Whatever your grounds of grouse against the British for our poverty and slavery, it would be too much to denigrate everything British.

Spy : We are uncompromisingly opposed to everything that has British flavour. Slaves, as we are, should skip everything British and bureaucratic, particularly when

everything Indian has lapsed. We are intensely Indian and enjoy being Indian. We are fighting British institutions, not individuals. We are sloughing old loyalties, scrapping the past and playing down everything British.

I : Why take a cheerless view of everything British? It is British pragmatism that has played its part in shaping India. It would be hard to imagine such an exceedingly good era returning.

Spy : Yes, British pragmatism has shaped India into an almost impregnable citadel of slavery! It is all the story of the wolf and the lamb. We are the biggest slave people, a motley crowd of robots, cringing serviles, in a huge and variegated country on the habitable globe. We are traditional slaves by heredity. We eat the stale and stinking stew of slavery cooked for us by our ancestors. We would be betraying our posterity if we, like our forbears, put up with this evil and let things stay as they are. Our forbears have been too much conformists and tradionalists. We must strike out of the beaten path, the hangover of a dead and disgraceful past. It is the indifference and dithering of our ancestors that has been responsible for our downfall. We have outgrown their servile and subservient submission to slavery. Our patriotic obligations should rise above our filial loyalties and disallow their sins to be visited upon us. Slavery is the greatest sin in this free world.

Slaves have no country and no nationality. Slaves have no state and no society. Millions are shackled on floors and pavements of crumbling ruins. They are freaks, a sermon on pity, as good as dead. They have long been told: "You are dead till further notice"! They do not have a life fully lived. They have empty lives and just drift through life in darkness. It is distressing to find that Indian India, for all her vastness, is nowhere but a mere blur on the corner of a big retina. She has only a beggarly relationship with Britain; receiving more kicks than half pence. It is why imperialists twist her round their little finger at will and treat Indians as the despised scum of Adam's progeny. The country has been constrained to us for all her sprawling territory. They direct our lives and define and decide our destiny as if slaves can never put a foot right. They care a fig for our cacophony of protests. For over a century, we have been treated as primitive people, living in rude times, the stone and steel ages, dragged in high gear,

trailing behind them like a lost soul, bruising bodily, morally and financially. Our destiny is yoked to the chariot of these drunken drivers. When they catch cold, we develop high fever. With our hearts rising in our mouths, we are living starved and naked under the lash.

We have only a fragile existence with an uncompromising future. Free thinking is unthinkable. Everything we think, say or do is British-oriented. We will never get any better so long as we are slaves. My heart cries with every beat. It sears my heart to be back in our slave country which has become an international joke. We have never been dead but only sleeping, sick in a slave country. We can't live with a high head. Humiliation is the worst of all punishments to a nation known for bravery but forced by circumstances beyond their control to grovel. We are puppets on strings without freedom of conduct and freedom of conscience, We can't tolerate constant stings and slurs on this score. We can't endure its torment. There must be something silly about a whole people of 400 million souls to submit to slavery en-bloc in a democratic world. We refuse to accept our inherited slavery. We refuse to be pushed around by the British any more. We won't doff our hats or bow to them in a slave salute any longer. They know our old price but they do not know our latest value.

Every Indian pines for a gulp of bracing climate out of the suffocating slavery. Freedom alone can ease us of this canker. We won't just live with this situation and die slaves. We won't stay slave a minute longer than is absolutely beyond our power. We will end both cultural and political slavery which is costing us a fortune, our honour, culture and civilisation. We will revamp our society and liquidate our economic morass and abject poverty and slavery.

High and low people fraternise when they roll in the gutter. Our one tremendous obstacle is west-crazy Indians who try to speak stilted English and pick our ruler's style instead of their skill. It is the coupling between the British and the native mercenary that is holding us in bondage. We have plentiful rags. We are slaves. We can't just blink it away. We can't banish slavery by looking away from it. All men are born free. Man makes the difference. We want a change. The world is changing quickly. The British refuse to move with the world around. But we will spare no

effort nor shall we despair of the time and tedium necessary to bring about a change. We must catch up with the free world and keep step with the times. We have set a goal and we will reach it. We must have the right to live in our own house as free citizens of a free country. Everywhere the hub of the talk is quick independence.

Home and humanity are indivisible. Humanity all over the world is made of common clay. Man should be equal everywhere, East and West alike. All of us are born men, the honourable progeny of Adam. We refuse to be ruled by the mice of the other day. Mouse to Man. This is what our rulers themselves believe they are. This is what they have us believe we are. We refuse to believe in Darwin's theory. We refuse to have apes for our ancestors. Man to man. This is our motto. We are better blooded. We were with them in Central Asia. They went West and lost colour and creed. They chased us. We want them in conscience and in justice leave us.

Give us back our ignorance and leave us in poverty. Given a choice, we would prefer poverty to rich slavery. We can live without food and never without honour. We would be happy hungry. Poverty or no poverty, slaves never really live. We won't stay slaves any more. We don't and won't believe in evolution. We believe in revolution. We act revolution. We want an overnight break with the dead and disgraceful past. We will face and fight the evil and start afresh, leaving our past behind us. The struggle is coming to the boil.

We are close to a repeat of the 1857 Mutiny with the difference that this time we are going to succeed. This is going to be their full and final failure, the loudest swan song for them. They are facing an inevitable fate which they cannot stay. We will soon send them packing. Once started, the revolution has broken into a gallop. A new brand of youngsters is taking command. We know the course would be steep and the cost high. We also know that we are in an unwieldy vessel, witnessing most cataclysmic events that have ever happened in the history of the world. We are, however, determined to drift ashore in triumph, whatever the sacrifice and whatever the time-lag. We are not deterred by the uncertainties ahead. We are nosing ahead with our crash plans. We do not agree with the constitutional means adopted or advised by the old guard. Such means are

meaningless in tumultuous times. This is the time to make or to break. Even if slow, we will steadily slide forwards. Violence or no violence, we are erupting into independence, the apple of our eye. Willy-nilly, the era of silent subservience is fading fast The days of dialogue of the deaf are over. We who toil and moil today will caper with joy tomorrow, believing, as we do, that out of sadness will come gladness.

I : What a braggart booster, wrong of facts, you are, nursing an illusion in an utopia without substance, rejoicing falsely in a world of shadows, making fantastic and outrageous claims, thinking the unthinkable, conforming more to the ideal than to the real. You billow balloons in the air. Independence is a long-term hope.

Spy : What you say is police polemics, making unsolicited predictions. You see things through the eyes and lies of the British. Independence is coming too soon. We are not saying and doing all this in play. We are sure to win, whatever the converse talk may be. Our ring has got going effectively and efficiently.

I : You are full of brave hopes: only miracles can fulfil them. It is edifying to see you indulging in histrionics, making assertions which are obvious blabbers, Desh-bhagats are a razor-thin dissident minority, few and feeble, who have brought nothing extra to the movement which is still a lack-luster affair. Your entire approach is lopsided and haywire.

Spy : Of course, we are full of brave and basic hopes. Our number is in the hundreds of thousands. Even if a minority, as alleged, our courage beats numbers. India would soon be getting its long-cherished freedom before the forties are out, says our oracle. The independence would be our miracle and our memorial. It is the British who now need a miracle to refurbish their image. This is an awesome reality.

We never talk in terms of our extra contribution to the movement. If nothing more, deshbhagats have helped the movement as much as anyone of the foremost freedom fighters. No other organisation can hold a candle to deshbhagats. It is they who are considered a major menace by the British. All attempts to sweep us out with an iron broom have dismally failed.

I : All you say is a day-dreaming. The various organisations have lost their appeal with the people so much

that they are getting impatient with the politicians, feeling, as they do, that what they say is old stuff and a hackneyed bluff. Whatever they say is a bid for top. People who have never given a tinkers' cuss about the welfare of the country are foremost in the agitation. Mashroom super-patriots are angling for lucrative offices, jockeying for power and position. The political charlatans and jingoes are endeavouring to gain popularity. The stock-in-trade of these political demagogues has run out. Barring politics, they have nothing to do for a living. Political morality is as rare as political unity, as rare as communal harmony. This is the stuff of which our flambuoyant heroes are made. Why cudgel your brain on a fruitless mission in a communal-ridden country? The parties are still too far apart. We need to walk before ability to run in a much invaded and much divided country. You must not beguile the gullible.

Spy : You are all wrong. We beguile nobody. No movement can be sustained by lying to the people. We have nothing to conceal or deceive. We do it in front of the nation's all-seeing eyes. We have caught their imagination and inspiration and organised them from the bottom up. An impatient nationalism is stirring in the grassroots. We are determined to come together as one people and one nation, failing which the country would be cleft into many regions. The first test for a nation is the quality of its people. Our people are now pure patriots. They are no longer afflicted by mass blindness. On the other hand, they have jettisoned mutual prejudices and are agog to have their fundamental birth right. They are disenchanted with the British so much that they are burning with hatred against them. The hatred is highly abrasive on the issue of independence. They are in the grip of an angry and volatile frustration. Any snap poll will show that they do not want to stay British a day longer than is unavoidably necessary

It is incorrect that any of the political organisations has lost its appeal with the people. Our appeals never go abegging. Our people are on the march, giving our movement of their best without any rest. The mass agitation is overwhelmingly spontaneous. There is no blinking the fact that parties which had been in the wilderness since long are now well to the fore.

Again, it is incorrect that the parties are still too far apart. On the contrary, they have coalesced in the interest of the common cause. All Indians and Indian

organisations are now one community knit by a blood brotherhood.

I : I still hold that our leaders are divided on communal and political grounds inexorably. There is no unity or united front. It is very hard to work the people and the leaders.

Spy : But with all what you say, we won't allow the fragmentation of our leadership to impede our way to independence. India may be a thousand diversities but it has one destiny and one destination. The anger and agony of our hungry people at the rapacious exploitation of the country transcends all borders of communal and political alignments. Beside, deshbhagats are ambassadors of Hindu-Muslim unity.

I : A large number of parties is in the field. Everyone of them is claiming credit. No one really knows who is calling the shots in the country. Is it the Congress, the Muslim League or who ?

Spy : Deshbhagats are the grassroots strength of all the parties working for independence. None dare count us out. We have bigger muscles than any other party in the field. Whatever they might say about us, each one of the deshbhagats is Mr. India, an heir-at-law of everything Indian.

I : The revolution which has flared up so spectacularly may be doused in a matter of days. The country continues to have frequent riot deaths, undoing what many a Mr. India claims to have done.

Spy : No, the revolution is not so fragile. There is no going back. We have reached a point of return. The British have loosened up under our pressure. Among the symptoms of our success is that every day they do worse. Another symptom is that they are getting sullen, senile and sulky, tired of being truthful or trustful.

It is because of the divide-and-rule policy of the British that India has often been a benighted land of vicious riots, blood and tears, blighted crops, wrecked houses and slaughtered civilians. The revolution is sure to reverse the situation. The rumblings of a raging storm are clearly audible. Our firebrands are every bit killers. Unless the British quit, we won't sit. We won't rest or relax until we achieve our cherished success. We are fully braced for political fireworks. We have the field entirely to ourselves. We shall fight until, in God's good time, we win. We have the ball at our feet

in our court and, by all odds, we are moving forward to the goal. The crisis is heading to a climax and our tests and trials are nearing a victorious terminal. However hard our trials and profuse our tears, who laughs last, laughs the loudest and the longest.

I : You are recklessly wrong, deluding and flattering yourself too much. The British are nowhere near collapse. It's no worse in India than in any other colonial country.

Spy : The British provide classic examples of bad colonists. All percipient politicians know they have reached their watershed in colonialism. The foundations of colonialism are quicksands. The shifting sands are now kicking up dust into their eyes.

We have never known or heard such chronic and callous colonists through time. Colonialism, however enlightened, is a bankrupting domination worse than war. We know from experience that colonialism is an Upas tree that poisons and kills democracy, root and branch. Colonialism and democracy run parallel to infinity without meeting anywhere. Colonialism can never co-exist with freedom. It is a road to ruin. Its consequences are killing. It is an exclusively Western act of provocation rooted in warfare. All colonists are dinosaures to us. Foreign interests and intrigues plague a colonial rule. We won't stand such a rule, a motley of dyarchy, aristocracy, bureaucracy and timocracy.

The British, like all colonists everywhere in the world, have feet of clay. They can't mount and maintain a military occupation of India indefinitely. Though colonialism is so complete in every area of our life that to rebel against it is to acknowledge it, it would soon be out of season, a guady anachronism, an 18th century relic. We must emerge from the sloth of centuries and show to the world that colonialism collapses under the weight of a united people.

The British are at the end of their holiday in India. Their high days are over. They would be on the way out presently. They shall have to set their withdrawal for some near date. They can no longer fit a twisted peg in a square hole. Time is propitious for them to get out and for us to get in.

I : All this is in bad taste. Mud thrown is ground lost.

Spy : No, mud thrown to expel colonists is ground gained.

I: What form of Government would the deshbhagats have in an independent India ?

Spy: Democracy: rule of the people, by the people, for the people.

I: But democracy would equal anarchy in a country which had never had anything of the kind before the advent of the British. India had been ruled by kings, conquerors, chieftains or rebels down the centuries. Might was right. Such being our history in the pre-British period, how and why do you clobber Britain?

Spy: Yes, so far ruled, as we have been, by foreigners, all dictators, we had no democracy. But the previous pernicious wrong cannot justify the present vicious wrong. Indpendence has long been a forbidden fruit for us. But now the forbidden fruit tastes very sweet. We want in India what the British have in England. One time Roman England is now purely English England. Why can't British India be Indian India ? When an Englishman's house is his castle, an arsenal of democracy, he has no right to make ours a hell. As he would not be a slave, why should he be a master? Like the Romans, the British seized power in the dim past. They can't retain it in the present-day all pervading, dazzling democracy. We mean democracy with a massive and extensive dispersal of power in which ordinary people will have a full say in the conduct of their own affairs. We believe in the immutable principle that people have a right to make or unmake their own government. We have awakened our country-men to a consciousness of their own heritage. We can no longer fit into the straight jacket of colonialism and imperialism. We won't leave the current tussle between colonialism and patriotism any more in conflict. We won't tolerate our vast country to be a wretched appanage of blatant imperialism any more.

(Democracy with all its defects is to be preferred and the remedy for its ills is more democracy" Chief Justice Muhammad Shahabuddin)

(Devil was the first domocrat—Byron)

I: Would this be the western brand of democracy ?

Spy: No, any western brand of democracy would not be a legal tender but an elementary blunder in an independent India. We would evolve everything Indian in type and texure as against everything of foreign import. At present, everything is made and repaired in England—rules, rulers, law and the custodians of law. The British have patterned everything after their model. We

have always had trouble with both English and the English. We will end it all once for all.

I : We are a backward country with little literacy and no tradition or understanding to fairly or fully exercise our franchise under a democratic constitution. We must educate the masses. No nation can be both ignorant and free; both ignorant and great.

Spy : Yes, but only an independent India will educate its masses. It will take quite long to lift the curtain and dispel the blinding darkness. Meanwhile, we will run the country under the tutelage of our top leaders. We are sure to make mistakes. But even blunders committed in good faith by an uninitiated people in training under a democracy would be hundred times better than spicy crumbs thrown by a foreign Government to a few flunckeys. Let them leave us to troubles and errors. We might stumble but we will never lose the way.

I : Did you contact the Press ?

Spy : Yes, I did. I met certain journalists at Lahore and Amritsar. I did not disclose my hand to any of them. Mr. Bali of "The Tribune", Lahore, was one of them. Like me, most of the patriots have infiltrated the Press. The journalists endorse our campaign.

I : Do you believe in whatever is being dished out by the Press ?

Spy : Yes, I do, though with a pinch of salt. You better transpose this very question on to yourself with a difference : Do you disbelieve all that the Press says?

"(I believe in the Press, despite all its lies and vulgarity" says E. M. Forster in his article titled "What I believe").

The British are faced with a cynical Press, running gloomy columns, dishing out their worst against them. They are being rapped over the knuckles by the national papers which are lambasting them for their anti-national policies. The most militant section of the Press has swipes at the British Government alleging that it is wholly divorced from the people and that the British are extremely diplomatic and devious. Even some of the pro-British propaganda-peddling papers, particularly the Civil & Military Gazette of Lahore, though a popular tabloid always supporting their rule in India, advise them that it is time they left. They are being pressurised by every newspaper to quit. Though they

try to manage the news, a war of attrition is being conducted by the Press turning out a spate of venomous articles against them every morning and evening. Screaming headlines and a persistent badgering have worked up the masses to the utter embarrassment of the British. Photographers stand by with their cameras at the ready to depict them if and when they do anything untoward. The pen is mightier than the gun-powder. The British fear the critical pen more than the sharpest sword.

Deshbhagats also battle by posters. They operate calendestine printing presses, publishing bulletins and leaflets fomenting discontent in the country.

I : Why do you revile Government servants and tar all of them with the same brush ? You are beating the air and barking up the wrong tree. You may attack Government policies but not all the executing officials who have no beverage to influence the policies of the party in power in England.

Spy : But for a few laudable exceptions, we have mercenary services, fossils of the past, unnecessarily officious and bumptious. I say they are Government servants, servants of the alien Government. They are not public servants. Their vision is blurred by official blinkers. Our people now stand up to the domineering officials. The British are ruling through native puppets. They can't stand a single day without the coloured support. They can't go it alone. The administration will collapse if the Indian component left in dudgeon or applied the heat, even though they have not much experience in Government and are no more than underdogs seduced by Britain's siren voice.

Time has come when our officials should swim with the tide and look the prevailing mood and misery of the people through our eyes. It is with this end in view that deshbhagats have had cells among them, rank on rank. All the services have been affected and we expect most of them would switch over to us the moment the Government gainsaid them. Even some of the closest confidants of the British would defect to us. Some military deserters are in our midst. Many of the military and the police are already incipient revolutionaries. The Government knows this and has lately scattered the anti-Government elements in the Police and the Military through different districts and units.

I : Are you sure about the veracity of your allegation that the British have planted their stooges as cells in the national organisations fighting for freedom ?

Spy : We have big toads in small puddles. Man is cheap. Slaves are cheaper. Our country has the dubious distinction of having too many of these stool-pigeons. We are being defrauded by too many tricketers and slicksters. It is these boot-lickers who fracture our unity. It is these traitors who bite us out of pique when even a dog does not bite a dog. It is these oldguard lackeys and lesser sons of our motherland who drag us down and stir up mischief. It is they who act as power-brokers of India. They talk what they are taught and tutored. But they have little support with the people. It has gone haywire with them that they don't understand our national needs.

The British tolerate only such Indians in authority as are without morality. They support only such sharpers and sycophants as play courtier to them or have political honeymoons with them. They subsidise poetesters, parodists and mount-banks to panegyrise them. The more we tease them, the more they need them. Flunkeys prosper, these secondary megaphones to the British. Blackguards pamper. Numerous blimps have exploited the Englishman's embarrassment and catapulted themselves to heights too dizzy for them. Nobodies have become big-bodies. The British appease them by awarding glamorous titles to them. The titles are rewards for sycophancy and badges of slavery.

For our part, we tolerate no traitors. Patriotism is no longer on sale. It can no longer be plied with gold. Who wins when money and patriotism come into conflict now? Of course, patriotism. Deshbhagats never cancass for money. We keep our accounts in good standing. We bear the palm without dust. On the contrary, evil-livers are nearing their hapless journeys end. These rats are sure to desert the sinking ship. We know who they are and where they are. We discern the real from the fake. We have separated the sheep from the goats. We have dossiers on big traitors. Dissidents must integrate or get aside. In the alternative, we crush whoever rears his head against our movement. We scotch all snakes in the grass.

It is time to dissolve old loyalties into new. But crooks can never assimilate themselves into the truly national society. They comment on our exploits from side-lines without the dare to come to the fore. Men

of easy conscience under-write our effort and try to politically castrate us. We know they dislike us but they cannot deny us. No captious critics can find fault with our conduct. Therefore, we don't give a hang about what they say against us.

Political murders of hardboiled traitors are popping all over the country like fireworks. When a traitor dies, he dies a dusty death forgotten. When a patriot dies, he lives. We love to die for such a death. This is a great hour to live or die for the country. While cronies crawl and cringe, we stand up and fight the British. These are the days of our destiny. We are supremely confident our hour has struck. We never had it so good.

The British should fear the horrors of history which knows the fate of Goliaths in the past. History is going against them. They will disappear in the limbo of history. A history of their reign in India would be an anthology of heinous crimes committed against a helpless humanity, a continuous tale of blood-curdling tragedies and broken pacts and pledges. They have made an unholy mess of our history, pock-marked it with scars. To cover the cruelty committed by the East India Company in cutting off the fingers of the cottage industrialists of Dacca for producing goods superior to those imported from England, the story of Black Hole of Calcutta was padded. Therefore, it is imperative that we discover our true history and re-write it with a nationalist slant. We shall soon haul them up before the highest court of history and they shall have to bow before its inexorable laws.

It is a long time since our own history came to an end. The British period in India is the wasted interlude in which the country has no use of its great sons. We would compress 200 years (100 years in the Punjab) of the foreign rule into a history of our own real men and leaders. We will continue to cry for liberation. It is an indelible lesson of history that human rights must prevail and that "It's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease and lubrication". This is our greatest opportunity in history to send them into oblivion.

We are making history every day, coming as we are with the tide. We'll clean up biased history. We will turn the tide to meet the changes and challenges of modern times. We are at the threshold of a most

freakish period of our struggle. This is their bleakest hour and our greatest opportunity. We look back in anger. We regret our past. We are looking expectantly to the challenging future. We rest our future on ourselves. We will boldly live out the present pregnant with a great challenge and a great opportunity.

Nobody can defy history. Our history is on the march. No body can stop it. As they say, in the march of history there is no turning back and no standstill. Our future lies not only in what we do but also in what we fail to do. What is required is sacrifice. Sacrifice is the sustenance and spirit behind success. We will make it. We believe that it is better to die on one's feet than live on one's knees.

We will relegate our present rulers to books presently. They stand alone, The days of their gun and glory are gone. They had till recently two alternatives : terrorism or conciliation. They have tried and failed in both. We know with comfortable certainty that they shall have to go with their dead without an elegy; only their faded memories will stay in hazy history, leaving their Kings and Viceroys standing in stones at our mercy. The 1857 Mutiny and Jallianwala tragedy would be the worst epitaphs on the tombstone of Britain in India. The British will soon be no more than a have-been. Instead, our names and fames will bear. Even our words will bear. As they say "Words at great moments of history are deeds". The grateful people will put up tablets to our memory. Even a solitary sentence in the history books would be a sufficient monument to our sacrifices.

> "Man's history is waiting in patience for the triumple of the insulted man."
>
> —Rabindranath Tagore.

I: Independence is elusive. It doesn't keep schedule with a people's desire or dictation. You are envisaging a hypothetical future. You are in a long tunnel where you can't see the end of it. It is yet too dark to risk a run and reach the destination in hectic time.

Spy: True. We have learnt the hard way how elusive and slippery independence is. But we are too sticky a stuff to leave it in the lurch. We are making an epic struggle for independence. We have blazed the trail and come a long way in the tunnel. We hope to come out of the tunnel and ultimately out of the woods for an early whiff of free and fresh air. We have to hack

a path through the dense overgrowth and pull the game out of the doldrums. The air is already fully vibrant with activity. We have full faith in the destination to make the tiresome journey. Every passing day brings us near our goal. The only direction in which we move is forward. The guns and the gun-laws can's hold us back.

We want independence with a complete break and total rupture with everything British. Britain has made India Achilles Heel of her Far Eastern policy. Independence of India will finish her military, political and material power-penumbra in Asia. It is the British themselves who have stoked the fires of independence in us by their misbehaviour. It is they who have driven us into the throes of a crisis, never realising in the heat of the moment that it is a crisis that creates a nation. Now the incredible fact is that we would be independent very soon. The darkest hour, when our spirits are deeply dormant but never dead, is before dawn. The bright glow of independence is visible. It is no longer a false dawn. Independence is within our reach. It is our passion and pride. It is the dominant topic in public speeches and corridor conversations. We will certainly get it over with them.

We don't demand liberty as a largess but as our inalienable birth right. Like good things freedom belongs to the whole humanity which has no frontiers. Whatever the toil or tears, we will regain our human heritage. Why should they recoil at giving us our due? There is no conceivable justification or any reasonable explanation or excuse for a third country to rule over us. We should have the right to dispose of our own destiny.

Our independence is coming in the wake of world-shaking developments over which the British have no control. Britain is not strong enough to defy world opinion and moral judgment. Sensitive to the universal trends, they shall have to go. Why should they delay today what they shall have to give tomorrow ? He gives twice who gives quickly.

I haven't seen the newspapers lately but I am sure the movement is running on the tracks. The situation changes by the minute. The British regime won't endure beyond a hundred years in the Punjab from 1849. By this time next year we will have achieved independence. The British are nearing the fork of the road ; their last time and the last terminal have come. They shall have to leave lock, stock and barrel.

Independence is on its way. There are already straws in the wind. It is tantalisingly near at hand. It is just knocking at our door. It can't be denied entry for long. It is the temper of the time. The British will wake up to a surprise any morning. They have come to the end of the road. It is time they themselves pulled up stakes and left. We want their military and political evacuation. We have issued tart leaflets, telling them that they should quit quick. The turn of the tide is against them. A slight tremor would now be enough to topple them out. Power is sure to ebb from London to Delhi a little sooner or a little later. The British are sure to lose their heads when they lose their jobs.

I : What will inexperienced Indians do with independence in the midst of economic poverty and intercinine quarrels rooted in long standing racial and religious differences? Conditions won't correct quickly.

Spy: We are not unaware of the birth-pangs of independence in a long-riven country. Independence brings both blessings and burdens to an unsettled society. But the Congress has already belied the impression sedulously fostered by the British that it is still a divided India. The best thing that could have happened to a heterogenous India is the overwhelming popularity of the all-class All-India Congress. We are pragmatic rather than dogmatic. We are constant to our comrades of every caste and creed.

Besides, Independence proceeds by trial and error. The game is worth the candle. A period of rapid change and re-adjustment would follow. Our country spans a massive continent. Independence alone promises power and prosperity to a viable country. There can be no sense of civic responsibility without going through the actual experience in an independent India. We'll work hard for a better tomorrow, a boom future, a haven where a man could be his own man, an Indian Indian. We are on the edge of a new era. We'll have, in place of the humiliating past, a challenging future. We belive in the India of the future. We stand trustees for everything that is cardinal to the good of our country. It is a wonderous opportunity. Our economy will take off and we will get out of the red and make the country solvent. It will enable us to come into our own. It will be our land, our language and our law. We will have governments of our own choosing. We will have grand and glorious governments with liberal tole-

rance. This will enable us to take up its construction. We have economic poverty, no doubt, but no political or brain poverty. We have both brainy and brawny people and selfless leaders.

(Lord Bryce in his "Modern Democracies" says that "a people should not be given institutions for which it is not ripe in the simple faith that tools will give skill to the workman's hand."

This writer holds a radically different view. Given tools, even children assemble readable figures, toy houses etc. Why can't a whole people understand given institutions and put up new ones suited to their own requirements ?)

We want to see the re-birth of our country. Once we get going, we will develop a real life and a real light of our own. We'll revive our national languages. We'll discard English, a funny language in which a fat chance and a slim chance mean the same thing!

We will make an unwieldy crowd a disciplined nation. We will extricate them from the morass in which the British have bogged them down. We will restore reality now that we have discovered our long submerged sense of pride. We love to be persistent commoners in a casteless society and a classless bureaucracy, democrats in a democratic society in which power ascends from below. We will get our people new homes and new lives worth living so that they find it a rewarding revolution. We promise a utopia fairer than the New Delhi of British India.

We will build new bridges between the warring communities. We don't believe in the iron curtains of communism. The India of our dream would be open to men and ideas but not to foreign cultures of conquerors. We will usher in social, economic and ideological revolution. We will have our own solutions for our salvation. We will orient our youth at their grass-roots in the educational institutions to live in amity a life of peace and prosperity, whatever the religions, creeds and ideologies of their forefathers. All Indians are brothers and fellow-compatriots. Men of all ranks, plebeins and patricians, would receive equal treatment. We will find a niche for our people and a place for nationalist India on the map of the world. We shall tame the wilderness of dreary deserts and boost our agriculture. We'll convert wilds and wastes into fields and forests. We will shape new directions and new

dimensions, relive our glorious past in the present. This is how we will make a great and growing nation out of a heterogenous crowd.

We will also build new bridges to neighbouring countries—bridges of Indian ideas, national education and culture. We will have friends, no frauds. Things will start looking up, blossoming into a big boom. We are already moving into the future. Independent India would be our memorial. Indians would drink to Indian India.

I : What did you tell the Giani about your mission?

Spy: I told the Giani in confidence all about my mission and its execution by me and my accomplices.

(He admitted his confessions before the Giani in full. The statements made by him and the Giani checked closely in so far as they had talked the secret mission between themselves).

I : Where did you meet Ismail last?

Spy: Ismail and I met by arrangement at the Golden Temple, Amritsar to decide our future course of action. I told him that, if and when necessary, he could contact me at the following accommodation address :—

'Diljit Singh, Sewadar, Gurdwara Marhana Sahib, District Amritsar.'

I : Did you keep this address?

Spy : No, Ismail insisted to go home. This involved a risk of his arrest and that of mine in the result. The apprehension led me to keep my further movements strictly secret from him. I never went to Gurdwara Marhana Sahib to meet him or recieve his mail. I did this to cover my tracks from the Police. For the same reason, I refused to see him at the Taran Taaran Railway Station. Again, the same fear kept me away from my home village and my relatives and friends. I never kept one address long enough for the Police to catch up with me. I have no doubt that nobody could have got at me all the time I was on the run but for the Giani's slip in taking you for Ismail. The Giani was my one and all the only one who belonged to me. He had more than a father's interest in me and I reposed a great deal of trust in him. He was my confidant on everything. He countermanded my instructions and this resulted in my arrest. I can't blame him, a god-father, a good teacher who seasoned his lessons with jokes.

I : Didn't it strike you that Ismail couldn't work his way to the Giani when you had kept back from him the name and other particulars of his address?

Spy : It did, particularly in view of the fact that Ismail was too dim to work a tortuous way to reach the real Giani in the absence of full particular· of his address. I wondered how could he or would he find his way to the Giani in spite of his ignorance and reluctance? But on second thoughts I was inclined to feel that, if any, it could only be Ismail to reach a Giani of any description after I had myself given him the tip, however incomplete.

I : When it was you yourself to mention the word 'Giani' to Ismail, why did you stop short of giving him his full address?

Spy : I was going to tell him all about the Giani when a sudden premonition pulled me up half way. It was the fear that he, in case of his arrest, would give me away, that gripped me in a flash.

I : Why did you tell him wrongly that the Giani lived near the house of the local Kotwal when actually he had not ?

Spy : I did it wilfully in an attempt to cancel or confuse whatever little I had inadvertently told him.

I : All this shows that you did not suspect my pose as Ismail.

Spy : No, I did not.

I : Then why did not you come to see me at the Tarn Taarn Railway Station?

Spy : Spies do not meet one another in public places under the glare of too many faces or too many police around. Moreover, there was no point in my seeing Ismail after he had told me his firm decision not to work for the Japanese.

I : Why did not you convey the reason of your reluctance through the Giani?

Spy : The real Ismail knew all this and needed no clarification through any emissary.

I : Then what for did you send the Giani to the railway station at all.

Spy : I did not send him. He went on his own to keep his appointment with you.

I : Did not you need a clarification from Ismail as to the shift in his previous decision not to work for the Japanese?

Spy : Yes, I did. It was for this reason that I had requested the Giani to ask you during the course of his meeting with you at the railway station to stay the night at his house. The intention was to afford me an opportunity to meet you. The offer was turned down by you.

I : But the Giani had made no mention of your wish to meet me. On the contrary, he had emphatically denied all knowledge about your whereabouts.

Spy : The Giani was under instructions to make no mention about my wish to see you at his house. This was because you had previously twice turned down his offer to arrange a meeting between you and me at his house. You had yourself raised the bogey of spies using the Giani's house as a meeting place.

I : Why did you want to see me at the Giani's house in spite of the bogey and in spite of what you have just said that there was no point in your seeing Ismail after he had told you his firm decision not to work for the Japanese?

Spy : The proposed meeting late at midnight at the Giani's house seemed safe enough to despel the bogey. I was only interested to know the background of Ismail's shift from his previous decision not to work for the Japanese.

I : Why did you go to the railway station and hang about the premises surruptitiously when you expected to see him at the Giani's house during the night?

Spy : I was keen to see him or overhear him from a distance unobstrusively at the first available opportunity. I could not do either, due to the intervening distance and darkness. I had strained my eyes and ears briefly when some four soldierly idlers who had no business to be there at that time and who strolled past between you and me, peering and smelling around, scared me away. A spy is all suspicion. He sees unseen and slips on the slightest suspicion. Had I seen you or overheard you at the railway station, I would not have gone to the Giani's house to meet you. The Giani knew this. This was what we had decided between us before he went to the railway station followed by me.

I : You say "Spies do not meet one another in public places————". Are you aware it was the Giani

himself to propose the railway station as the venue of our meeting?

Spy : Yes, I knew that but this was after you had declined to meet me at his house.

I : Why did not you suggest another place for our meeting if the railway station didn't suit you and the Giani's house didn't suit me?

Spy : The Giani and I couldn't conceive of any other place sufficiently secluded or secure for our secret meeting. I, being on a mission of espionage, had also the flecks of a midnight fear of a man chased by death.

I : Whatever your fears, you have run your course. Your fate has been running faster than your ingenuity, You have reached the end of your tether and come upon your fate at last. Your past has overtaken you. You have come home a long way to die. Get sweating.

Spy : (raged at the English Law once again and ranted about injustice done to the Indians under it).

The English law is the notoriously unreasonable ass. It has big ears but no eyes. It believes what it hears without seeing the truth of what it hears. It works real injustice to the Indians. The more you reason with it, the more it rails at you. The more you beat it up, the more it kicks, raises dust and reduces visibility, giving you the benefit of doubt. It is a bottomless pit with more holes than plugs, with more escape-routes than catches.

I : No, the English law on espionage has both eyes and ears. It is not unoften that it has bigger ears than eyes. This is because the offence of espionage is more audible than visual, more secret than documented. It has no holes or leaks. On the contrary, it is rather inexorable and impervious against spies who often end on the gallows. A spy lives inside a time-bomb. You have come to your journey's end, your destination of death, your immutable, inevitable final fate. Time is running out on you. You won't be saved from one minute to the next. The gallows looms for you.

Spy : (rolls up his sleeves and exclaims jauntily).

I hang the consequences. I am not afraid of anything or anybody. There is no torture worse than the torture of laws. But patriotism knows no law. It itself is a law unto itself. I don't care a brass-farthing for the British law. It has no teeth for me. It is not the

law of the Medes and the Persians for me. Whatever the laws, lenient or leaky, inexorable or impervious, I am not worried by the legal niceties ; whether they are soft or severe does not help or harm me. I sleep the sleep of the just.

Our motherland is calling us. We are at her beck-and-call, with our heads and all. We live in a slave country. A slave motherland is good to die for a son. She needs martyrs. A son in need is a son indeed. Mine would be a deshbhagat'sdebut with death. Death dodges desh-bhagats. Ultimately, however, death is a deshbhagat's destiny. A deshbagat accomplishes in death what eludes him in life : independence.

A deshbhagat lives only one life, the life of a hero. He dies in one piece. A coward dies piecemeal. It is better to be dead than to be half dead in dread of death. I have niether hope nor wish to live. I have nothing to live for. I have every cause to die for. The police ghosts haunt our homes with death and disaster. Why live and languish ? Why not die to live lastingly ? I'll be better off dead. I only regret that I have but one life to lose. It is time for me to die and for the British to depart.

You say that spies end on the gallows. Yes, they do. Why shouldn't they? Scaffold sways the future. Independence is under the shadow of the gallows. Directly the gallows falls under the weight of the martyrs, traitors stand a good chance of being executed too.

(We now tried every expedient to have a check-up made on his statement. We put him and his fellow-traveller, Zahoor Ahmad, together in the same cell and made arrangements to bug the cell. We spliced telephonic wires and attached them to an electric gear. We used secret minimicrophones, transmitters, tape-recorders and other listening devices.

Ajaib Singh gave Zahoor Ahmad a resume of his activities in India, adding that he had made a confessional statement before the police under persuasion and pressure.

Significantly enough, every confirmable detail of his statement, which dovetailed with the Giani's, was verified as essentially correct. It was no less significant to find that whatever he stated virtually reflected the prevailing mood of the political movement, the mood of the masses and, for that matter, the voice of the whole of revolutionary India).

IX.—THE TRIAL

The rest of the story is soon told. Ismail turned approver. The following persons were arrainged on charges of espionage :—

1. Ajaib Singh alias Jagjit Singh alias Amar Singh son of Sundar Singh, Jat, of Village Kallah, Police Station Sadar Taran Taaran, District Amritsar.

2. Zahoor Ahmed son of Ghulam Qadir, Jat Kahlon of Chak No. 117/RB (Jhiwar Kotli) Police Station Sangla Hill, District Sheikhupura.

3. Avdeshwar Rai. U. P.

4. Sham Lal Panday.

5. Mozamdar.

All the accused were prosecuted jointly in a marathon trial held *in camera* within the forbidding walls of the District Jail, Delhi. Mr. Charles Maurice Ormerod, I. C. S. was the Special Judge. The trial was set tentatively for early December 1943. It was, however, recessed for a week to allow the defendants to prepare their cases. Some of them had high connections. They engaged a team of superb, bright and big-time criminal lawyers in the country known for rhetorical fire and legal phraseology. The case for the Government was conducted by a Public Prosecutor, a nimble-witted young fledgling of the Delhi Bar. This was a trial at which two teams of legal brains met in the joust of justice.

The Defence demanded an open trial on the ground that "what transpires in a court-room is public property, that the public has a right to know its property and that publicity is vital to justice." This was exactly what was held by the Supreme Court of the United States of America in 1947. It was argued that "truth gets tarnished in a suffocating atmosphere inside closed doors and that justice should be done under the gaze and glare of the Press and the public."

The Prosecution counter-argued that the secrecy of the trial of an offence of espionage was a must for the security of the State in time of war and that the fall-out of compromise and penetration of the spy-ring would give a warning to the enemy country subsidising it to re-shuffle the racket and run it afresh.

Continuing, the Prosecution argued that it was to eliminate such a situation that certain countries always observed total secrecy about successful counter-espionage, that, for that matter, they seldom held spy-trials, that whenever they caught a spy, they sweated him secretly and that directly they finished with the job they deported him furtively to the country of his origin.

Concluding, the Prosecution asserted that another reason for holding the trial *in camera* was that, besides keeping its fall-out strictly secret from the enemy country, all the accused in this case belonged to this very country and had professedly been fighting for its freedom and that, as such, in view of the prevailing political stance of the maasses, it must be closed to the public to avoid any possible scenes in and out of the court.

The court allowed the plea of the Prosecution to try the case *in camera.* The charge of espionage was read out to the accused in the presence of their counsel. They were charged with delivery to the Japanese (*i*) military secrets, (*ii*) intelligence secrets, (*iii*) security secrets, (*iv*) political secrets and (*v*) economic secrets.

The accused pleaded not guilty to the charge and alleged that the Government had been fed on slanted information. On this, the hearing of evideuce commenced. It is incriminating evidence or the lack of it that inculpates or exculpates accused persons. It is no good knowing who the spy is without knowing what supporting evidence would be forthcoming. The presentation of evidence by the Prosecution and the Defence was both concise and precise.

Ismail, Giani Sewa Singh and I were among the prosecution witnesses. Ismail, being the approver, was put on the stand first of all. He gave a straight account of the background of the case, the training and the assignment of his batch and other accomplices within his knowledge. The Defence made abortive efforts to grill him into a piece of edible meat. First-hand knowledge is the best shield against any amount of adroit cross-examination and this stood him in very good stead.

Next came the Giani. Summons from the court had put him on the skids. Though well-grounded in the woes and worries of the world, he was quite new to the court call-up. But the shock wore off and he was soon in a better heart, perfecıly cool and collected. He was himself again, his usual self, serene and unflappable, in fine weather and at peace with himself, completely composed and all there. He was in the pink of condition. An usher called him in. He walked in with the free swinging grace of a militaryman. Ajaib Singh, who had given him a winsome smile on first seeing him in the court, soon grimaced on finding in him a surprise

witness against him. With fire in his eyes and fury all over his face, he swore at him :—

"Oh, you have turned King's Evidence ! Oh, you are swearing away my life !"

The Giani made a swell witness. The Court put him under oath to tell the truth and he told it all. My forecast was abundantly fulfilled. Not surprisingly, he had the grace to keep his word. The sarcasm that "your golden Giani" would be a freak witness, suffering as he allegedly did, from the foibles of fanatacism, and that, as such, he won't stick, did not tick. He stood by the Prosecution and gave a sizzling testimony of his truth with great fervour. He proved by his conduct in court that he was not a border jumper. He was noble enough to be touchingly true to his conscience and made a statement of the obvious. Though he drew largely from his memory he gave full details of Ajaib Singh's mission with great mental ability, absolutely accurately thrice with intervals of months between the telling before the Police, the Magistrate and now the Special Judge. Everytime, his statement equated the facts.

The Defence Counsel with sneers on his face, put portentious and fateful questions with inquisitorial ferocity in an effort to mix the Giani up and rip him to pieces. But the Giani stood it all and gave facts without any frills. His evidence gave the court vast amusement. He was a tremendous character, an engaging and winsome personality, a father-figure of unimpeachable integrity, a substantial denizen of the Sikh community, blessed with an awesome beard in full bloom on his face. He was every inch a man of old time, bearing the hallmark of a Sikh priest with an aura of great dignity and respectability. He was a bit stooped from work. He was somberly dressed, austere and withdrawn in demeanour. He had such an imposing and outstanding stature with great grace in his face that he stood in no man's shadow. He had a formidable look once again. The most remarkable thing about him was that, with all his grand-figure, he looked extraordinarily ordinary, uncolourful, a man who carried his integrity and rustic sincerity with him.

Though the Defence Counsels' bulldog tenacity was enough to wear any witness down, the Giani emerged unscathed. A cross-examination is seldom a case of prepared questions or memorised answers. And yet the Giani got a good passage. Wagging his patriarchal beard all the time, he stood a blistering cross-fire and a bitter diatribe short of badgering by the Defence Cousel with blinding brilliance, great elegance and intelligence of a man full of wise counsel and sturdy commonsense. His devastating deposition, which was essentially correct and which branded Ajaib Singh as a

particularly insidious agent of the enemy, ditched the Defence and gave a new edge to the Prosecution, providing, as it did, sufficient stuff on him. His saintly style and endlessly affable and graceful poise weighed with the court and, at the same time, stiffened the morale of the other witnesses. The Prosecutors winked over the discomfiture of the Defence to break him.

At the fag-end of his evidence, the Giani cast me a glance of gratitude and new respect and then, pointing me out to the court, he digressed as under :—

> "To my wonder and worry, this ghostly guest popped up from nowhere. He played his part so movingly that I took him for a dynamic deshbhagnt. He argued me out of my reluctance with such a feeling and fervent that I could not help helping him. The emotional appeal of his words was enough to touch the nostalgia of any patriotic Indian. His words stirred my heart. He played an anti-British deshbhagat with great perfection. Though he had not had the genuine credentials, he drove splendidly and gained my confidence by the seduction of his manner. He was so soft and suave that I have never ceased to admire the way he did it. I was so taken by his advocacy of his mission that I wished he stayed at my house. He beat me at my own game at my own house. He had so tightly spun his grisly web that it confused me into numerous errors by a puzzling crossing of many lines.
>
> ("He was a juggler who threw mists before my eyes"—Charles Lamb).
>
> "This was a masterpiece of a very cunning contrivance. He acted normal and made the whole thing so deceptively simple that none could be too shrewd to see through his ace card. He was the cleverest poseur I had ever met. No amount of searching dialogue could talk him out of his pose. I never knew there was more to him than met the eye. His subdued voice easily disarmed me. I wondered and blundered. He laughed away my masterly mistakes. I found him even-tempered under provocation. It was all so natural that I could not expect it to be any different. The whole drama was full of enormous reserves of police sophistry and subtlety, great sagacity and humility. It was only at the time of Ajaib Singn's arrest that I found the deshbhagat turned Policeman, a most embarrassing guest. My stomach turned on this ghastly discovery. He won the psychic jiu jitsu with me and the physical with Ajaib

> Singh. He was very fair to me. He redeemed my errors. Whoever does justice with mercy plays the part of Providence. He did it all. His role was classic in affable simplicity. How significant was this insignificant visitor. To me, the Punjab C. I. D. is an invisible Government."

On hearing all this, the Judge flashed me a radiant smile. The Prosecutor winked pleasantly at me in the midst of a round of looks, paying me a laconic tribute "you did very well, indeed." I smiled back shyly, saying: All this is a glowing exaggeration.

The Giani completed his evidence, called a fond farewell to me and left with a tranquil smile, a light heart, well-satisfied. This was the last I saw of him. He later wrote me a grateful letter thanking me lavishly : "I don't know how I am ever going to thank you. You got me a good getaway which has brought me monastic peace. You have given me two things—Life and Lesson—life from the gallows and lesson not to harbour a criminal."

The Giani's evidence was adjudged as specific and spicy enough to clinch the case against Ajaib Singh.

The case bristled with many debatable points and lots of legal fireworks. Smart and seasoned lawyers made pertinacious efforts with acidulated advocacy to rake up abstruse legal quibbles and forensic skills in order to riddle the opposing side from various angles. Brilliant interpretations were put on the documentary and parol evidence adduced by the parties. Though every accused appeared by his counsel, the Defence put up a united front on common grounds, as men who live with danger together sympathise with one another.

As always, the Defence tried to prove that their clients were innocent, insane or under-age. The big point pressed by Ajaib Singh's Counsel to urge his acquittal was that he was a tender-foot for the game. It was argued that he had never acted on any preconceived plan but on youthful impulse. "You appear to have never been young yourself", said the Counsel to the Prosecutor. As all the spies were under 25s, the plea proliferated so much that the Counsel for the other accused also capitalized on youth, as if espionage goes with grey hair only.

The plea was off-set by the Prosecution stressing that it was irrelevant in a case of espionage. The law on espionage makes no distinction between age-groups. The age of the offender is absolutely immaterial. The only provision, however, is that he should not be under legal age or below the age of consent. More

often than not, an accused in a case of espionage is a goner. All the accused in the dock were youngmen with old hands at the criminal game. Two of them, Ajaib Singh and Avdeshwar Rai, were elusive enough to play the role for a long time.

It was also pointed out that the law on espionage made no distinction between first offenders and habitual offenders. A spy is seldom a first offender. The offence is made up of a series of acts of espionage committed strictly unobstrusively. Even a single act, whether first or second, is serious enough to warrant capital punishment, let alone its repeat commission. The law spares nobody, high or low. Sir Roger Casement was executed for treason in 1916.

The Counsel for Ajaib Singh and Avdeshwar Rai got them to subscribe to a statement that they had not even looked for the wireless sets, revolvers or other equipment after their landing in the jungle. The Prosecution off-set the plea on two counts as poor and puerile. First, the sudden scare following their landing near a village on day-break had put them to flight for their lives. Flabberghasted they had lost their bearing and all hope to get at the equipment. Second, but for the force of the fearful and fateful circumstances they would have, for sure, looked for what was most crucial and indispensable for their personal security and the success of their mission.

Ajaib Singh took up the comic plea that his only object in playing the spy was to be arrested by the Indian Police at the port of entry and brought back home at Government expense! Everybody went into peels of disbelieving laughter at the patently preposterous plea.

Ajaib Singh : The police sentenced me to silence.

Judge : What?

Aiaib Singh : I mean they kept me in solitary confinement in atrocious cells in the Fort and brainwashed and dragooned me for long hours daily.

(This again aroused a humourous banter)

It was also argued on behalf of some of the accused that they were only pretended agents and that their real intention was to warn Indians of the bad designs of the Japanese. The prosecution counter-argued that the story that the accused intended to double-cross the Japanese was too disingcruous to hang together as none of them had volunteered to do or not to do anything to run out on their mission. It was, therefore, no surprise to find that neither of the fantastic pleas carried any conviction with the court.

Moreover, though the accused were under a strict discipline in the espionage school, there was no indication that any of them had tried to escape from it.

Furthermore, barring Ismail, when they arrived in India, none of the accused took the action which a person escaping from the Japanese would normally and naturally take.

It was also argued by the Prosecution that at the time of their arrest, the accused were undoubtedly in the employment of the Japanese, carrying Japanese wages on their person, acting under instructions of the Japanese and anxious, not so much to escape from the Japanese as, to escape from the British Government in India. It was alleged that the activities of all the accused were demonstrably subversive of law and order and that they had throughout given the impression that India was sure to become in the near future an independent State under the aegis of the Japanese.

It was, however, pleaded that some of the accused had done little or nothing in pursuance of the conspiracy owing to their early capture. It was particularly emphasised by the Counsel for Zahur Ahmed that he was a fresh arrival and that he had been arrested before he could find his feet, much less do anything towards the implementation of the alleged mission of espionage. The Counsel claimed that his client had just resumed straight life when a police officer got him from his residence, falsely showing his capture "in action in a running train." He pointedly underlined his plea that it was the train and certainly not his client that was running! Continuing, the Counsel pleaded that in this case the evidence was rather speculative than specific.

To establish the charge of conspiracy against the British Government in India under the relevent sections of the Indian Penal Code, it was, as it is, essential to prove an agreement between the alleged conspirators free from co-ercion, fraud, misrepresentation or duress.

Section 120-A of the Indian Penal Code says that when two or more persons agree to do or cause to be done (*i*) an illegal act or (*ii*) an act which is not illegal by illegal means, the agreement is designated a crininal conspiracy.

Provided that no agreement except an agreement to commit an offence shall amount to a criminal conspiracy unless some act besides the agreement is done by one or more parties to such agreement in pursuance thereof.

Explanation to section 120-A says that it is immaterial whether the illegal act is the ultimate object of such agreement or is merely incidental to that object.

Conspiracy is a substantive offence and has nothing to do with abetment. Again, conspiracy differs from other offences in that in other offences the intention to do a criminal act is not a crime by itself until something is done amounting to the doing or the attempting to do some act to carry out the intention. Conspiracy, on the other hand, consists in the agreement or confederacy to do some act, no matter whether it is done or not.

Criminal conspiracy may come into existence and may persist and will persist so long as the persons constituting the conspiracy remain in agreement and so long as they are acting in accordance in furtherance of the objects for which they entered into the agreement. The Prosecution pointed out that, as deposed by the approver, all the spies had been instructed by the Japanese to observe a strict privacy and secrecy of, not only their names but also, their pseudonyms and that all of them had abided by this.

Privacy and secrecy are the characteristics of a conspiracy rather than a public discussion in an open place.

Section 120-B lays down that whoever is a party to a criminal conspiracy to commit an offence punishable with death, transportation or rigorous imprisonment for two years or upwards, shall, where no express provision is made in the code for punishment of such a conspiracy, be punished in the same manner as if he had abetted such offence.

Section 121, I.P.C. says that whoever wages war against the Queen or attempts to wage such war or abets the waging of such war shall be punished with death or transportation for life.

Section 121-A: "Whoever within or without British India conspires to commit any of the offences punishable by section 121 or to deprive the Queen of the sovereignty of British India or of any part thereof or conspires to overawe, by means of criminal force or the show of criminal force, the Government of India or any Local Government, shall be punished with transportation for life or any shorter term or with imprisonment of either description.

"*Explanation*: To constitute a conspiracy under this section, it is not necessary that any act or illegal omission shall take place in pursuance thereof."

Thus, a reading of the legal provisions vis-a-vis the facts of the case *prima facie* proved the offence of espionage when the prosecution established that each of the accused had within or without India agreed to do or cause to be done an illegal act or an act, which was not illegal, by illegal means thereby constituting criminal conspiracy, no matter whether any act or illegal omission had or had not taken place in pursuance of the conspiracy. It was also

proved that each of the accused was privy to such a design on the part of his colleagues. The liability of each spy is co-extensive with that of the actual perpetrator.

The case was tersely argued by the Prosecution and equally ably contested by the Defence. Admirably cogent and convincing perorations were delivered by both sides. The emphasis was on the evaluation of the probative value of the corroborated or uncorroborated confession of an approver or an accomplice against his associates in crime. Among the witnesses for the Prosecution were Ismail and the Giani. It is necessary, therefore, to assess the comparative value of their evidence as argued by the Prosecution and counter-argued by the Defence.

Ismail had voluntarily surrendered himself to the local Police and was now prepared to turn States' Evidence and make a straight and truthful statement before the trial Court if only he were given a chance to do so. He had done nothing towards the implementation of the planned racket of espionage in India. At the same time, he was competent enough to describe details of the whole plan, the training, the instructions and the entire scheme of the criminal conspiracy hatched by the Japanese in Burma for action by their agents in India. In the circumstances. he was considered to be a fit person from among the accused for the tender of pardon. Under the English law, such a person is known as an "Approver" "Kings' Evidence" "Queens' Evidence" or "States' Evidence".

An "approver" is invariably an accomplice. Who is an accomplice? As per Newbould J, the word accomplice has not been defined in the Indian Evidence Act or in any other Indian Statute. An indication of its meaning may be found in section 337, Cr. P. C. (Criminal Procedure Code) as "any person supposed to have been directly concerned in the offence under inquiry." Briefly, an accomplice means a guilty associate in a crime, a person who has a conscious hand in its commission.

Huda J. says that to constitute an accomplice there need only be the intention of assisting in the commission of a crime but he need not know exactly what crime was being committed.

According to other authorities, an accomplice (*i*) must be a person implicated in the guilt and, as such, liable to be punished (*ii*) must be either *particeps criminis* or at least a person who could be put on his trial as an abettor under section 107 of the Indian Penal Code, or (*iii*) must be in the conspiracy or at least cognizant of the plot.

The Prosecution contended that the evidence of the approver, Ismail, was, by itself, enough to secure conviction of the spy, that, as such, it did not require any corroboration and that, if it did,

the Giani's deposition as a witness to the extra-judicial confession of the spy provided the necessary corroboration. The Defence counter-argued that no conviction could be based on the uncorroborated testimony of an approver (Gurdit Singh, 52 P L R 1918; 9 P W R 1918), that the Giani was as good an accomplice as the approver and that one accomplice could not corroborate another accomplice.

Both Prosecution and Defence quoted good authorities on law and logic to press their respective side of the case. It was quite a treat to listen to the learned discourses and frantic efforts made by each side to carry conviction with the Court. The Prosecution was rather brief in its build-up and the Defence rather long and laborious in doing that build-up down.

Among the anthorities quoted by the Prosecution were the following :—

(*i*) Conviction can be based on the approver's uncorroborated evidence (Abdul Wahab (1925) 47 All. 39 and (Nawab (1925) 7 Lah. L J 219) .

(*ii*) Approvers' uncorroborated evidence need not be rejected totally but should be accepted with caution (Sunderdas, 1926) 19 SLR 111, .

(*iii*) The evidence of an approver should be used against the other accused only after his complicity in the crime is tested and found satisfactory (Sant Ram, (1923) 9 O & A L R 324 ; 741 C. 543).

(*iv*) A Judge must direct himself to treat the evidence of an approver with the greatest caution and suspicion but neverthelss to act on this evidence if he believes. It (Govindo 17 N L R 133 ; 69 I C 257; (1920) 23 Cr. L J 673.

(*v*) A Special Bench of the Madras High Court. consisting of Sir Arnold White, C. J. and Sankaran Nair and Ayling, JJ. held in Nilkanta, (1911) 35 Mad. 247 : 22 M L J 491 as follows :—

"It is not the law either of England or India that the evidence of an accomplice must be corroborated in material particulars before it can be acted upon. Where a Court is Judge of fact as well as of law, the Court as a Judge of fact is not precluded from considering the question whether the unsupported evidence of an accomplice is true or not. A Court may be warranted in declining to draw the presumptions of fact referred to in illustration (*b*) to section 114, Indian Evidence Act (I of 1872). Section 133, Evidence Act, is the substantive enactment

declaring the law, whereas section 144 only lays down certain propositions intended to assist the Courts in drawing inferences of fact.

(*vi*) A Special Bench consisting of Benson Wallis, Miller, Sir Abdul Rahim and Sundara Ayyar, JJ. held as follows:—

"The evidence of an accomplice need not be corroborated in material particulars before it can be acted upon and that it is open to the Court to convict upon the uncorroborated testimony of an accomplice if the Court is satisfied that the evidence is true. The Indian Evidence Act (II of 1872), section 133 read with section 114, illustration (*b*) merely intend to lay down that a conviction upon the uncorroborated testimony of an accomplice is not illegal where the presumption of an untrustworthiness attaching to the evidence of an accomplice is rebutted by special circumstances.

Section 133 of the Indian Evidence Act is the only absolute rule of law laying down that the uncorroborated testimony of accomplices by itself is enough for a conviction while section 144, illustration (*b*) is merely a guide to assist the Court that there should be corroboration.

Section 114 concides with the rule observed in England that though the evidence of an accomplice should be carefully scanned and received with caution, and may be treated as unworthy of credit, yet, if the jury or the Court credits the evidence, a conviction proceeding upon it is not illegal.

The Defence referred to eminent judicial authorities in support of its claim that though there was no positive legal bar in taking an approvers' evidence as a basis for a conviction, yet, unless some reliable corroboration on material points were superadded to it, it would in almost all cases be unsafe to accept it as conclusive. (Maung Lay (1924) Rang. 173: 25 Cr. L J 381).

The evidence given by an approver requires the same amount of corroboration as that of an accomplice (Surat Bahadur, (1924) 11 O L J 640 : 81 I C 986).

The Defence relied upon similar opinions expressed by Lord Alverstone C.J., Jervis C.J. and Peacock C.J. and Lord Abinger and Buller, JJ. in a large number of cases and argued that though under section 133, Evidence Act, as well as under the English law, an accomplice is a competent witness against an accused person and conviction is not illegal, the rule of caution that such testimony should be supported by extrensic evidence connecting the accused with the crime is now regarded as a rule of law.

An accomplice is not an ordinary witness in respect of credibility. He is, on his own admission, a man of bad character, who took part in the offence and afterwards, to save himself, betrayed his former associates and who placed himself in a position in which he could hardly fail to have a strong bias in favour of the prosecution. The real danger is that he is telling a story which, in its general outline, is true and it is easy for him to work into the story a matter which is untrue. It was argued that, as Judges had noted on innumerable occasions, the tendency to include the innocent with the guilty was particularly prevalent in India and that it was very difficult for the Courts to guard against the danger.

Depravity of character is a characteristic of every approver who, having taken part in the offence, betrays his former associates just to save himself. . . . . (P L R 1927 S C 317).

There is no rule either of law or of practice which seems to furnish an inflexible canon as to the precise degree of corroboration which, in all cases, should be demanded for an accomplice's evidence.

Sir Lawrence Jenkins, C. J. observed:—

> "The nature and extent of this corroboration is well established. There must be corroboration not only as to the crime but also as to the identity of each of the accused ; and ordinarily it must proceed from an untainted source. This is no technical rule but one founded on long judicial experience."
>
> "A statement of an approver, in order to be a basis for conviction, must be a trustworthy statement. . . . . amply corroborated in material particulars . . . . . independent of the accomplice or of the confessing accused" (Sheroo (1925) Nag. 78).

The corroboration need not be direct evidence that the accused committed the crime; it is sufficient if it is merely circumstantial evidence of his connection with the crime . . . . what the law clearly requires is that some relevant and material part of the approvers' story incriminating the accused should have support from an independent source—(Barkati, 103 I C 109: (1927) Lah. 581).

The well-known rule of criminal law is that an accomplice is unworthy of credit unless he is corroborated in material particulars. The rule is formulated in section 114, illustration (*b*) of the Evidence Act.

The rule is not absolute as will be evident from section 114, illustration (*b*) and section 133, Evidence Act but it is only in exceptional cases that corroboration can be dispensed with.

On balance, the Prosecution had to concede to the contention of the Defence that under the rule of law it was virtually a must that the testimony of the approver Ismail should be corroborated in material particulars by the evidence of the Giani. But the Defence now proceeded to attack the evidence of the Giani as being that of an accomplice, adding that one accomplice could not corroborate another accomplice, the approver.

The Prosecution contended that the Giani was a witness who was not concerned with the commission of the crime, that he could not be said to be an accomplice and that, in the circumstances, his statement was a good corroboration of the approver's testimony. It was argued that he was in no way associated with any act of espionage nor had he extended any aid for its furtherance or commission.

On the contrary, the Defence pleaded that a person cognizant of a plot or aware of the intention of certain people to commit crime and not disclosing it to a person in authority was a consenting party to the crime and an accomplice so that his evidence required corroboration. In this connection, attention was invited to section 44, Cr. P. C. which imposes a duty on every person to inform the nearest Magistrate or Police Officer of the commission or intention of committing certain offences mentioned therein. The offence of a criminal conspiracy against the State is one of such offences.

The Defence also referred to primary and secondary accomplices. One who takes an active part in the commission of crime is a primary or principal accomplice in the first degree. And one who stands by, while the crime is being committed, would be an abettor, an accomplice by implication or an accomplice in the second degree.

It was alleged that the Giani was an accomplice in the second degree because he was *(i)* "cognizant of the plot" of espionage, *(ii)* a consenting party to the crime, and *(iii)* a wilful failure to comply with section 44, Cr. P. C. It was further argued that the evidence of a witness, like the Giani, who admits that he was cognizant of the crime to which he had testified in Court but had taken no means to prevent or disclose it, was no better than that of an accomplice (Chanda Chandalini, 24 W R Cr. 55).

It was alleged that the Giani was accessory after the fact in that the spy had taken him into confidence about his mission, his training, his equipment, his assignment and his activities on his return from abroad. An accessory after the fact is an accomplice if he has before betrayal rendered himself liable as such (Per Mukerjee, J. in Pulin Bahary Das (1911) 16 C W N 1105).

It was emphasised that the Giani was cognizant of the plot of espionage, that he was privy and accessory after the fact and that, with all this, he failed to comply with section 44, Cr. P. C. He was an accomplice both in fact and in law. It was pointed out that he had been found from his own testimony as a witness to have been privy to the crime alleged to have been committed by the spy and that his evidence was no better than that of an accomplice (Nur Muhammad, (1925) 6 Lah. L J 529.

Umed Sheikk (1926) 30 C W N 816.
Followed 21 Calcutta 328 : 24 W R Cr. 55.

Yes, the Giani may be all this and more, yet he was not an accomplice. He was anything and everything on his own admissions before a Police Officer. He was nothing of the kind in view of the inadmissibility of his admissions before the Police Officer. A fact is no better than a fiction in law without evidence. Nothing is a fact or a fiction but evidence or the lack of it makes it so.

But no law covered precisely at least one phenominal feature peculiar to the case. To the best of his ability or the worst of his culpability, the Giani had made his admissions regarding the spy's complicity in espionage to a "deshbhagat" without knowing that the "deshbhagat" was a Police Officer. The disclosures made by him were voluntary and spontaneous without any duress or undue influence incidental to the presence of a Police Officer. This being so, the admissions made by him were not covered by sections 8, 25 and 26 of the Evidence Act.

Again, the admissions of the Giani, even if made consciously before a Police Officer, would be admissible in evidence if he were treated as a witness instead of an accomplice. Oral account of statements made by witnesses to the Police in the course of investigation under section 151, Cr. P. C. are admissible under section 157, Evidence Act (Baldev Koeri, 6 Pat. L J 241 : 22 Cr. L J 433).

Even if the Giani were treated as an accomplice, the statement made by him, assuming he knew that the deshbhagat was a Police Officer, exculpating himself, would be admissible in evidence (Akhtiar, 6 S L R 143).

While statements made by a person to a Police Officer in the course of investigation and taken down in writing may not, by reason of section 162, Cr. P. C. be proved by the production of the writing, they may be proved by the oral evidence (Sundara Ayyar, J. of the Madras High Court in Nilkanta (1911) 35 Mad. 247 ; 22 M L J 49).

The incriminating statement made by the spy to the Giani in the absence of the Police and subsequently repeated by him before the Police could be held to be a confession admissible in evidence (*Cf*: Wadhawa Sing (1923) Lah. 389 (2).

The Court rejected the plea of the Defence that the Giani was an accomplice. It accepted the confession of the approver as truthful and the deposition of the Giani as a sufficient corroboration by a reliable witness.

On this, the Defence switched on to purely abstract platitudes of patriotism, sentimentalism and emotionalism. It was alleged that the Giani and other prosecution witnesses were traitors and that the accused were true patriots worthy of praise instead of punishment. However, nothing of the kind could appeal to the Judge, an Englishman, who knew more than anybody else in those days of the "Quit India Movement", the extent to which Indian National interests diametrically cut across British national and international interests. The one serious objection to the trial for espionage was that the State was its own judge as to what endangers its security. It was because of such an intriguing situation that the Defence felt uneasy and openly alleged on pain of committing contempt of court that in a case of espionage the line of demarcation between justice and politics and equity and iniquity was extremely thin, that diplomacy and duplicity had the better of law and logic and that the very allegation of espionage, whether right or wrong, was an anathema to both the Executive and judiciary of a country. The Judge hailed from a country, Britian, where Municipal Courts regard themselves as bound by a certificate or an authoritative statement on behalf of the Executive in regard to certain matters falling peculiarly within the Crowns' prerogative powers, such as the recognition of States, the diplomatic status of persons, although such a certificate or statement may be difficult to reconcile with the existing rules of International Law, the Municipal Law or the independence of the judiciary. The Crown's prerogative might have had nothing to do with a trial for the offence of espionage, but its resulting impact was apprehended to effect its territorial integrity, sovereignty and cross global interests. This was a case in which the British Indian Government was the Prosecutor before a British Judge presiding over a Municipal Court. It was why the Defence, getting diffident, posed the question as to who would interpose to prevent a manifest injustice wholly irremediable at the British law administered by a British Judge in British India in a case in which Indian and British national and political interests were interlocked in a killing clash at cross-roads. It was alleged, in the words of Clarence Darrow in 1936, "There is no such thing as justice—in or out of Court."

(*Cf* : dialogue between two characters in the "F B I Story" by Gordons, page 107 :—

"You don't believe them (F B I) ?" asked one of them.

. . . . . "I neither believe nor disbelieve. I leave such matters to the stupid courts where justice is as blind as its symbol . . . . . ."
replied the other.)

The accused alleged that the barbarous British kept appearances of justice between coloured contestants only but the justice lay bleeding in a contest between the coloured and the colourless, between Indian and British nationals, a contest in which the British Judge would play the dishonest politician. It was pleaded that it would be a tragedy of error if the accused were convicted under the deep shadow of dark doubts. The very charge of espionage was vehemently impugned as a misnomer, a misapplication and a contradiction in terms in a case in which the sons of the soil were waging a war of attrition against a foreign rule. It was alleged that this was a case in which facts were fallible and suspicious sustainable.

Prosecution : What you say is rather scandalous.

Defence : Nothing is scandalous which is relevant !

The Prosecution refuted all the oblique references to collusion and coupling between the State and the Court as utterly baseless. It contended that espionage was a drama of death, a game of the gallows of the culprits own choosing, that it were they who, in spite of their knowledge of its dangerous implications, had opted for death and that it was not a case of justice bleeding but one based on substantive and indicative evidence and cogent pleading. It was alleged that the offence of espionage was the worst form of treason and that treason during the war was worse than an invasion. It was, therefore, argued that it was not so much the State, much less the Court, but the law that was most uncompromising on espionage. It was claimed that the Prosecution had made out an irrebutable case of espionage against the accused on the basis of both intrinsic and extrinsic evidence and presumptions of law and fact.

The Defence now argued that colonialism was a crime at the International Law for obvious reasons. The transport of slaves on the high seas was, as it is, an act of piracy under the English Law. Piracy was, as it is, an offence under the International Law. Why should not colonialism, in which a whole nation is enslaved in

their own country, be an offence under the English Law as well as the International Law ?

On hearing all this, the accused, who had often nothing better to say than a vociferous defence, took the cue and glowered at the Court :—

> "It should be we who should try you, Mr. Judge, and not you us! You are guilty of exactly what you charge us with. Our trial will end up in your own trial."
>
> "We are traitors—Yes, but to whom? To you and not to our country. Our patriotism is to our country, not to the country of this colonial court. Our trial is a trial of patriotism. This is a case in which we are being coerced to listen to the clanger and jangle of "My Lord" as the lord of our luck and lives."

The Defence alleged that the Prosecution had conveniently omitted to take steps to segregate the examined from the unexamined witnesses while the testimony of those under examination was being recorded and that the result was collusion and covert of testimony between them. The Prosecution strongly repelled the allegation as absolutely baseless.

While on the subject it would be of interest to refer in passing to some other legal provisions bearing on the question of quantum of evidence necessary to prove a fact :—

> (*i*) No particular number of witnesses shall be required for the proof of any fact (section 134, of Evidence Act).
>
> (*ii*) It is not illegal to convict a person on the evidence of only one witness. It must entirely depend on the circumstances of each case. (114 I C 353 (F B).
>
> (*iii*) The court has an inherent power to check an undue multiplicity of witnesses. (Wigmore Art 1906).

Presumptions and probabilities legitimately arose in the case. "Where evidence is fallible, it is safer and proper to look to the probabilities". The probative value of the testimony of witnesses coupled with some irresistable presumptions and forceful probabilities was so substantial to prove the case for the Prosecution that the very question of the evidence being fallible or infirm did not arise. Nor was there any need or occasion to invoke such unfair, dangerous and sweeping maxims as "False in one particular, false in all". A complainant, a witness or an accused wrong in one particular may be right in all others and *vice versa*. Unless a wrong

throws doubt enough to damage the whole image, combinations of rights and wrongs should be meticulously weighed to see whether what precipitates is just and equitable enough to covict or clear the accused. The offence of espionage is so serious in its consequences to the State or the accused that the evidence adduced by the parties should be weighed in golden scales highly susceptible of the slightest tipping.

Each case turned upon its own facts. Each party pressed their side of the case making eloquent and moving speeches. A counsel, who was related to one of the accused, wept bitterly in defence. On this, the Prosecutor addressed the court : "I wonder if your Lordship would expect the Prosecution to weep in reply!" (subdued laughter). This generated sharp exchanges, rejoinders and surrejoinders between the Prosecution and the Defence and the Judge. Some of the accused complained that they had been cooped up in solitary cells and fed on starvation meals scientifically designed to keep them barely alive. This was incorrect. We believed that a satisfied stomach, a sound sleep and a straight speech went together. And yet they created scenes in and out of the Court, as a part of their pleadings and protestation of innocence. They shouted, peal after peal, that their trial by an English Judge would, for sure, do them retributive justice. One of them yelled: "It is a lawless land where spies have no laws to break," I remember the repertoire of the Court orderly and the police guard to the most truculent of them "Dont you misbehave." All this sustained the dramatic tension of the trial. But whatever the tempo of the tension, the accused had a full and fair field.

What the Prosecution pleaded proved. The evidence led by the prosecution looked black, indeed. The Prosecutor, therefore, during the course of his summation, demanded death sentences by shooting. The demand was accepted by the Court. The prosecution won the case with a facile margin. All the five accused were convicted and awarded capital punishment on 23rd May, 1944. Ajaib Singh was convicted and sentenced to death at No. 1 in the judgment. He alleged that the judgment was a judgment of revenge. Avdeshwar Rai was his partner in death.

Time proved me right. The judgment supported my stand all the way. The prosecution had marshalled the facts and circumstantial evidence so convicingly that the Judge emphatically wrote at the very outset of the judgment that the case against Ajaib Singh was the strongest of all and that of the whole lot, he alone had managed to play the role for the longest period.

Ajaib Singh and his fellow convicts went in appeal on points of law. The appeal was dismissed by Mr. Justice Sale of the High Court of Judicature at Lahore. All the appellants were

awarded capital punishment. This was how Ajaib Singh died young in the fulness of his promise. I read the judgment in a Top Secret printed book which, unluckily, is not available with the Provincial C. I. D. now.

This was how what had looked a foolhardy adventure beset with difficulties ultimately turned to be an epic experience and a memorable legend. This was how a token start and a tenuous beginning in a stubborn case snow-balled into an achievement. This was a case in which hope waxed and waned several times. I was in the grip of alternative bouts of hopes and fears and elation and depression for quite sometime. I was throughout half-hopeful. I never knew I was progressively winning in losing. The spy never knew that it was not his fellow deshbhagat but death paying him an unscheduled visit. I had to try many a bluff to work him out of his harbourer. The see-saw attitude of his harbourer would raise a hope now, throw a damper a little too soon and then fail to kindle at all. The entire enterprise from the field to its finale was full of surprises in unexpected failures and successes. It was a difficult and delicate case, extremely bad and baffling. A tense expectancy keyed me up throughout.

No formula, no blue-print or a guideline, capable of a mechanical application, can be laid down for success in a game to catch a shy-cock. Counter-espionage is a game of guerilla tactics. Everything does not come fine first in a hunt. Like a love-affair, any fool can start it but none can end it without skill or sacrifice. It requires a tapping of one's full potential and tactics and techniques to suit changing situations failing which anyone who ventures on such a course assumes the risk of being shot. Death brushed close and appeared quite bodily three times to me. Everytime it missed me by a whisker. I had to face untold hazards in a rough going, a tight-rope walking, a delicate balancing on tiptoes. But I was never deterred by the unending geography of hell. Nobody who has the temerity to do all this can be expected to have his heart in the right place. Luckily, I had. Hand in action and heart with God did it.

Counter-espionage is seldom one adventure. It is a kaleidoscope of one adventure running into another, one piece of puzzle after another. Characteristically, the adventure in this case was no exception. It was made up of a series of acts which ran across many shallows, slowed down many a time but never stopped. An adventure, like marriage, is a risky pursuit worth trying, a challenging job, demanding a wholetime devotion and dedication and yet, like a lottery, full of surprises. "Its' when you're safe at home that you wish you were having an adventure. When you're having an adventure you wish you were safe at home."

The glitter prospect of an imminent success and consequent exuberance of exhilaration was enough to keep any sagging spirit up. I moved on my own calendar. I made an appointment with myself and kept it. The job was of my own choice and I did it with patient relentlessness. It was a combination of inspiration and perspiration and luck and pluck and I invested emotion and devotion to do it. I played a devoted deshbhagat. The magic of that name worked. The enterprise was, from start to finish, an amalgam of soft and seductive confrontation, simulated smiles and snarls, tiffs and hits and all the grimaces and the expressive pulls and twitches of the facial muscles of the parties in and out of the court. I faced the hard and soft of it all.

Patience pays. This is what has been observed by an eminent policeman : Seven-tenths of police is patience and hard work, two tenths intuition and one tenth gifts from the gods" The case in point examplified this saying with a difference. The success was a gift, not from any man-made tiny tin gods but, from one Great God. Again, the gifts from God are too incalculable to be squeezed into one tenth of the whole.

Fortune favours the daring. Nothing venture, nothing win as nothing comes of nothing. The more one dares, the more one does. A combination of courage and conviction did it all. Courage carries conviction. It took me a total of only six days between the epic travels to lift the airtight lid. But it was after plodding days and weary weeks taken by other agencies previously that events careened in a big way when I went it all alone, single-handed and single-minded. Never was a choice so stern. And never was such a stern and sticky tangle so persistentiy pursued and ultimately crowned with signal success. I had sidled into a spys' den and stumbled out unscathed. This was a dream come true, the acme of my desire achieved with a full measure of my dominating ambition. It made quite a splash in the police and public circles and won me still another round of plaudits and a fulsome praise of senior officers and colleagues.

As before, the D. I. G., who was beaming with delight, accorded me an effusive and rapturous welcome, giving me the exclusive credit for the huge success of the case from start to finish. His compliments were so flattering that one could live on them for a lifetime.

> "He has already played a star-role in smashing the spy-ring. The case was a nagging worry, requiring a combination of talent, perserverence and gallantry. The whole episode deserves a cover story. The ability and originality in detection, investigation and interrogation displayed by him in this case has no school. This was a case in which prudence and patience, brain and bravery

and luck and pluck were big factors. Courage is a cold choice and he made it. The entire drama bristles with stamina, skill, suspense, surprise and success. He richly deserves the luck he has. He undertook a big and bold venture and notched up a proud victory, working entirely by himself. He has cut the complex and confused Gordian knot with elegant ease, dynamism and determination. He has performed a hat-trick by uniquely putting up three overdue milestones—the establishment of identity and capture and conviction of the spy. He is a precocious veteran in the job. He alone has licked the intractable problem and risen to the ticklish task with a lot of go in him. He has done it so quickly and so easily, so briefly and so brilliantly. The conviction of this awfully difficult and fearfully risky case has made an unbeatable record for him."

The D. I.-G. commended in his D. O. letter dated 30th November 1943, what he had observed spontaneously :—

"Dear Muhammad Hussain,

"I am delighted to see that His Excellency the Viceroy (of India) has been pleased to award you the Indian Police Medal for gallantry. I congratulate you heartily on this honour. The award is of course in connection with your arrest of the Japanese agent Ajaib Singh in which you showed great resource and courage. I hope that this honour is only the first of others to come.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) E. W. C. Wace
C. I. E.
(D. I. G., C. I. D. Later I. G. Police),
Punjab.

Sir John Bennett, I, P., M. C., Inspector-General of Police, Punjab, congratulated me in his D. O. letter No. 235-D dated the 7th December 1943, as follows :—

"My dear Chaudury Sahib,

I have much pleasure in offering you my personal congratulations on the award to you of the Indian Police Medal for gallantry announced in the Gazette of India dated the 27th November 1943. The courage displayed by you on the occasion for which the medal has been awarded was examplary and I am very glad that His Excellency the Viceroy has seen fit to recognize it in this way.

I trust the award of this distinction will be an encouragement to you in your future service and that you will always remember that,as a wearer of the Indian Police Medal, you are a marked

man from whom the highest example of conduct and behaviour will always be expected.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) (Sir) John Bennett.

The announcement in the Gazette of India and Sir Bennett's letter conveying his personal felicitations were followed by the sub-joined publication in the Police Gazette Notification No. 255-H, dated 8th December 1943 :—

> "His Excelleney, the Viceroy of India, has been pleased to award to Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain the Indian Police Medal for gallantry."

The medal for gallantry carried a special allowance to last for lifetime. Besides, the medal and the allowance, the Government gave me a big cash reward.

As a result of the interrogation and investigation made by me, another spy-ring organized by the Axis Powers during World War II throughout India was liquidated. Mr. E. W. C. Wace wrote to me another personal letter of appreciation dated 22nd April 1944 :—

"My dear Muhammad Hussain,

I am desired to convey to you the Government's appreciation of the skill, patience and perserverence which you showed in your detailed investigation and interrogation of the German—Japanese spy-group headed by Chopra, and to say that the excellent work done by you has played a great part in the success achieved against these enemy agents and in the extraction of vital information. The Inspector General has asked me to add his thanks for and congratulations on your excellent work. A copy of Government's letter has been placed on your personal file.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) E. W. C. Wace."

I was in the news. The award was carried in the Press. It appeared in the Tribune and the Civil and Military Gazette, English dailies of Lahore. Big head-lines blared in the Gazette. "The Prized Catch Convicted". Though, in the first instance, the news had got cramped by official taboos, some of the newspapers soon ran articles across two columns and rehashed the story of capture and conviction from different angles. The country rang with the case. Mr. Jai Parkash Narain, the top paladin of the Indian Congress Socialist Party, who was still under interrogation with me and who was supplied the Civil & Military Gazette,

congratulated me with a suppressed smile just to break the bleak atmosphere of official drudgery.

I was now in full cry. My colleagues milled around, hellowed and hugged me close. Everybody had a glint in his eyes and used amiable phrases for me. They adjudged the episode as my epic forte, a scintillating momento and a living legend. I was gay, glowing in the warmth of their affection. I felt that the award had a prestige more than monetary value.

This was how the tense and terrible trial got me prize and praise and pride and publicity. I was, with justice, proud of it all. I still live with the pleasure of too many memories in the case to this day. I look back on all this with an unforgettable nostalgia and equanimity. It was a weary and dreary venture filled with danger and enchantment, a traumatic experience pleasantly relived in the telling and retelling. I chuckle gleefully in the glow of pride in retrospect to a scene 25 years back and it is still too fresh in my mind and bones to forget, underlining, as it does, that success begins with one's will and that it is just the gift of intelligence and diligence, dedication and nagging persistence. An investigator cannot be a perennial optimist. It is a perennial attrition of promising clues and changing situations that pay off. The main obstable in tracking down a crime is not so much the offender as the investigator.

He who seeks finds.

By the same Author

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